



PSALM 19

"Nothing is hidden"

Translation and Performance Notes

LEGEND FOR COLORED WORDS:

Key term

Emotional exegesis

Imagery

Figure of speech

Proper name

Any other words/phrases

Participant notes

Hebrew Text verse English Close-but-Clear Translation

לְמַנצֵחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:	1	For the director. A psalm . By David .
הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֵל וּמַעֲשֵׂה לְדָוִד מְגִיד הַרְקִיעַ:	2	The sky is declaring God's honor , and the firmament is telling about the workmanship of his hands .
יוֹם לַיּוֹם יִבְרַע אָמַר וּלְלַיְלָה לְלַיְלָה יִתְּוֶה־דַעַת:	3	Day after day pours out speech , and night after night imparts knowledge .
אֵין־אָמַר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי וּשְׁמֵעַ קוֹלָם:	4	There is no speech , and there are no words whose sound is not being heard .
בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ יֵצֵא קוֹם וּבְקַצֵּה תָּבֵל מְלִיָּהֶם לִשְׁמֵשׁ שָׁם־אֵהָל בְּהֶם	5	Its verse line has gone forth throughout the whole earth, and its words [have gone forth] throughout the edge of the world. He has set up in it a home for the sun ,
וְהוּא בָּתְוֹן יֵצֵא מִחֻפְתּוֹ יִשְׂוֵי כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוּץ אֶרֶח:	6	and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his tent . He is glad, like a warrior, to run his course .
מִקַּצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצְאוֹ וּתְקוּפָתוֹ עַל־קַצוֹתָם וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִחֻמָּתוֹ:	7	His starting point is from the edge of the sky , and his turning point is at its edges , and nothing is hidden from his heat .
תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נַפְשׁ עֲדוּת יְהוָה נְאֻמָּה מִקְפִּימַת פִּתִּי:	8	YHWH's instruction is perfect, restoring life . YHWH's testimony is reliable , making simpletons wise.

<p>פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרָיִם מְשַׁחֲחֵי-לֵב מִצְוֹת יְהוָה כְּרֹה מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם:</p>	9	YHWH's commandments are just , causing the heart to rejoice. YHWH's command is flawless , giving light to the eyes .
<p>יִרְאַת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לְעֶד מְשַׁפְּטֵי-יְהוָה אֱמֶת צְדָקוֹ יִחְדָּו:</p>	10	Fearing YHWH is pure , enduring forever. YHWH's rules are true ; they are altogether right ;
<p>הַנְּחָמָיִם מְדֻבָּב וּמִפְּנֵי רֵב וּמִתְחַקִּים מְדֻבָּב וְנֶפֶת צוֹפִים:</p>	11	those which are more desirable than gold , even much pure gold , and sweeter than honey , even virgin honey from the honeycomb .
<p>גַּם-עֲבָדָה נִזְקֵר בָּהֶם בְּשִׂמְרָם עֲקָב רַב:</p>	12	Furthermore, your servant is warned by them . There is great reward in keeping them.
<p>אֲשֶׁר יִדְבַּר מִי-יָבִין מִנְּסֻתוֹת נִקְוִי:</p>	13	Who can discern mistakes? Clear me from the guilt of hidden sins!
<p>גַּם מְזִדִּים חֲשֹׂה עֲבָדָה אֲלֵ-יִמְשְׁלוּ-בִי אֲז אֵיתָם וְנִקִּיתִי מִפְּשַׁע רַב:</p>	14	Also, prevent your servant from committing presumptuous sins! Do not let them rule over me! Then I will be blameless and innocent of great crime .
<p>וְהִנֵּי לְרִצּוֹן אֲמַר-יָפִי וְהִגִּדוּ לִפְנֵי לִפְגִּי יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:</p>	15	Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before you, YHWH, my rock and my redeemer!

GENERAL TRANSLATION TIPS FOR THIS PSALM:

- To translate poetry accurately and beautifully, a knowledge of both the source language's poetry and the target language's poetry is needed. So, here are the steps we recommend to follow when setting out to translate this or any psalm:
 - GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE'S POETRY/ARTS.** Research and analyze many examples from numerous genres of poetry, storytelling, and music in the target language and culture, and document findings. See our [Local Arts Analysis Guide](#) for help.
 - GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOURCE LANGUAGE'S (HEBREW) MEANING AND POETRY.** The aim of all our materials is to provide exactly this for the translator, poet/musician/artist, and consultant: an understanding of what the psalm *means*, as well as its *poetics*.
 - TRANSLATE THE PSALM IN THE APPROPRIATE LOCAL ART/POETRY GENRE(S).**
 - TEST THE TRANSLATION WITH THE LANGUAGE COMMUNITY, SEEKING FEEDBACK ABOUT BOTH WORD CHOICES AND FORM/GENRE/MEDIA OF TRANSLATION.**

TRANSLATION TIPS - THE PSALM AS A WHOLE

These are the elements that we believe are most helpful to keep in mind during both drafting and checking translations, to help verify that the translation or performance is accurate beyond just a word- or verse-level; just as important is accuracy on the level of a **whole**.

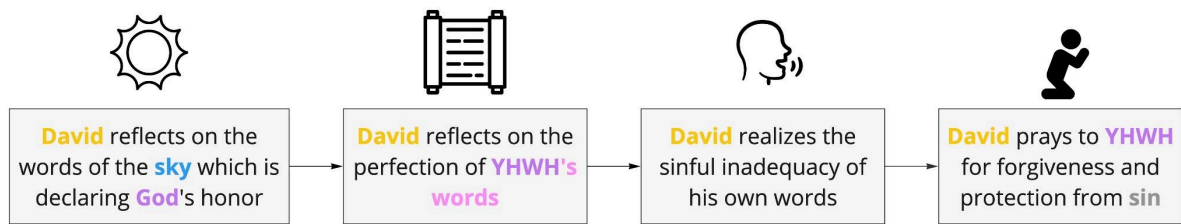
1. Overview

The picture below gives a basic **Overview** of the Psalm, answering the following questions:

- **Title-what title best describes this unique psalm?**
 - "Nothing is hidden"
- **Purpose-why was this psalm written?**
 - To pray for blamelessness. The psalmist asks YHWH to clear (that is, forgive) him from past sins (v. 13) and for YHWH to help him to remain blameless in the future (v. 14).
- **Content-In summary, what is said in this psalm?**
 - YHWH, make me blameless (verses 12-15)! Your glorious perfection, seen in the sky (verses 2-7) and in your covenant instruction (verses 8-11), exposes my sin and my need for blamelessness.
- **Message-what is the general theme of this psalm? What seems to be the main point the psalmist wanted his audience to realize by hearing this psalm?**
 - In order to be blameless and acceptable, YHWH's people need both his instruction and his redemption.

2. Background

- **Background Ideas**-what are the common cultural assumptions which are the most helpful for making sense of the psalm?
 - The continuation of the created order, seen most clearly in the continuous succession of days and nights (cf. Gen 8:22), is a testimony to God's honor and skill.
 - This rhythm of day and night is governed by the movements of the sun, moon, and stars, which God created and placed in the sky (Gen 1:16-18).
 - The sun is closely associated with righteousness and law (cf. Mal 3:20; IQ27 I:6-7; see Sarna 1965).
 - Coming into contact with YHWH's glory and perfection leads a person to recognize their own sinfulness (cf. Isa 6).
 - Only "blameless" sacrifices are "acceptable before YHWH" (cf. Lev 22:21; Lev 1:3).
- **Background situation**-what are the series of events leading up to the time in which the psalm is spoken?



3. Sections

Knowing the layout of the psalm by sections helps us to understand the progression of thought as the poem progresses. **The picture below shows the main “chunks” or pieces of the poem. Verse numbers appear on the left. The second column has a title for each section. The large third column contains a brief summary of the section’s content. As you read through the content column, you will see important words and ideas highlighted in similar colors. The icons on the right may be used as memory aids.**


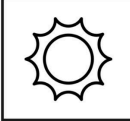
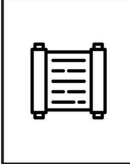


v. 1	Superscription		
v. 2	The Words of the Sky	The sky declares God's honor. Not a word of the sky's speech goes unheard.	
v. 3			
v. 4			
v. 5		The most brilliant part of the sky is the sun . Nothing is hidden from its heat.	
v. 6			
v. 7			
v. 8	The Words of YHWH	YHWH's perfect instruction is like the sun .	
v. 9			
v. 10			
v. 11			
v. 12	The Words of My Mouth	I, your servant , feel the effect of your perfect instruction (just as everything feels the heat of the sun). Make your servant blameless !	
v. 13			
v. 14			
v. 15		Let my words be acceptable, YHWH, my rock and my redeemer!	

Progression of Thought-How do the sections of the psalm flow from one to the other?

- **The psalm divides into three major sections:**
 - **The first section begins with a report that the skies and days/nights are praising God to the ends of the earth. Then, the sun is described in joyous terms as giving heat that touches everything.**
 - **The second section begins with highly rhythmic verses about the instruction of YHWH and its positive effects.**
 - **In the third section, the psalmist asks to be freed from both intentional and unintentional sin, so that the psalmist's words and thoughts might be acceptable to YHWH.**

4. Emotions

Part of poetry is communicating emotion. Each section, and even each verse, can contain a number of different emotions. Here are the main emotional themes of each section:

v. 1	Superscription		
v. 2	The Words of the Sky	awe	
v. 3		joy & vulnerability	
v. 4			
v. 5			
v. 6			
v. 7	The Words of YHWH	joy & vulnerability	
v. 8			
v. 9			
v. 10	The Words of My Mouth	distress	
v. 11			
v. 12		hope	
v. 13			
v. 14			
v. 15			

5. Prominence

It is also important to consider how the author chose to draw attention to certain parts of the psalm. Here are the parts of the psalm that we believe are most prominent, and thus should be most prominent in a performance of the psalm.

The **most prominent** part of Psalm 19 is verses 13-15:

1	למנצח מוזיקה לדוד	1 For the director. A psalm. By David.
2	השמים מספרים כבוד-אלי ומשעה יזיו מגיד הרמיז:	2 The sky is declaring God's honor, and the firmament is telling about the workmanship of his hands.
3	יום ליום יבע אפר ולילה ללילה יתנה דעת:	3 Day after day pours out speech, and night after night imparts knowledge.
4	אז-אמר ואין דברים: כל-ישמע קולם:	4 There is no speech, and there are no words whose sound is not being heard.
5	בכל-הארץ יאמ קום ובקצה תבל מילום לעלש שם-אמל בנות:	5 Its verse line has gone forth throughout the whole earth, and its words [have gone forth] throughout the edge of the world. He has set up in it a home for the sun,
6	והוא כהןו יאמ חתמל: יש-ל כגבור לרץ ארו:	6 and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his tent. He is glad, like a warrior, to run his course.
7	מקצה השמים ויפלא: וחסמל עי-קמלתם ואין להלל חסמל:	7 His starting point is from the edge of the sky, and his turning point is at its edges, and nothing is hidden from his heat.
8	תורת יהוה חסמל משבת גפש עזרת יהוה נאמנה חסמלת פה:	8 YHWH's instruction is perfect, restoring life. YHWH's testimony is reliable, making simpletons wise.
9	חסמל יהוה ישרים חסמל-לב: מצנת יהוה כלה מארת שבים:	9 YHWH's commandments are just, causing the heart to rejoice. YHWH's command is flawless, giving light to the eyes.
10	ראת יהוה טורה עמרת לעד משפט-יהוה אמנת אדמו יתנו:	10 Fearing YHWH is pure, enduring forever. YHWH's rules are true; they are altogether right;
11	החמלם מנהב יפטר רב: וחתמלם מרש נמת צופים:	11 those which are more desirable than gold, even much pure gold, and sweeter than honey, even virgin honey from the honeycomb.
12	גם-עבדך נותר בום: כשלים עמך רב:	12 Furthermore, your servant is warned by them. There is great reward in keeping them.
13	שגלות מר-יני: מנסרות עני:	13 Who can discern mistakes? Clear me from the guilt of hidden sins!
14	גם עתים ו חסל עמך: אל-ישלד-יב אז איתם: וקמל ממשע רב:	14 Also, prevent your servant from committing presumptuous sins! Do not let them rule over me! Then I will be blameless and innocent of great crime.
15	הני לרצון אפר-י: והניו לבי לעמד: יהוה צורי ונאלי:	15 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before you, YHWH, my rock and my redeemer!

- These verses focus on the *application* of YHWH's instruction to the speaker's life (also verse 12).
- Verses 2-11 are positive in nature, but the tone shifts significantly in verses 12-15. This final section contains vocabulary regarding **error**, **guilt** and **sin**, and pleas for **forgiveness** and **protection**.
- Verses 13-15 begin with a question, which is the only question in the psalm. The psalm then transitions into a series of direct requests to YHWH.

The **second-most** prominent part of the psalm is verses 8-10:

- The theme is **YHWH's instruction**.
- Verses 8-10 contain six of the seven instances of the divine name **YHWH**. The name occurs in every clause of this section, but nowhere before this section. **YHWH** occurs more time in the final clause of the psalm for a perfect seven.
- Each clause is highly rhythmic, with the usual order:
 - YHWH's instruction, then
 - a single positive adjective, then
 - a 2-word positive phrase describing what the instruction *does*.

1	למנצח מוזיקה לדוד	1 For the director. A psalm. By David.
2	השמים מספרים כבוד-אלי ומשעה יזיו מגיד הרמיז:	2 The sky is declaring God's honor, and the firmament is telling about the workmanship of his hands.
3	יום ליום יבע אפר ולילה ללילה יתנה דעת:	3 Day after day pours out speech, and night after night imparts knowledge.
4	אז-אמר ואין דברים: כל-ישמע קולם:	4 There is no speech, and there are no words whose sound is not being heard.
5	בכל-הארץ יאמ קום ובקצה תבל מילום לעלש שם-אמל בנות:	5 Its verse line has gone forth throughout the whole earth, and its words [have gone forth] throughout the edge of the world. He has set up in it a home for the sun,
6	והוא כהןו יאמ חתמל: יש-ל כגבור לרץ ארו:	6 and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his tent. He is glad, like a warrior, to run his course.
7	מקצה השמים ויפלא: וחסמל עי-קמלתם ואין להלל חסמל:	7 His starting point is from the edge of the sky, and his turning point is at its edges, and nothing is hidden from his heat.
8	תורת יהוה חסמל משבת גפש עזרת יהוה נאמנה חסמלת פה:	8 YHWH's instruction is perfect, restoring life. YHWH's testimony is reliable, making simpletons wise.
9	חסמל יהוה ישרים חסמל-לב: מצנת יהוה כלה מארת שבים:	9 YHWH's commandments are just, causing the heart to rejoice. YHWH's command is flawless, giving light to the eyes.
10	ראת יהוה טורה עמרת לעד משפט-יהוה אמנת אדמו יתנו:	10 Fearing YHWH is pure, enduring forever. YHWH's rules are true; they are altogether right;
11	החמלם מנהב יפטר רב: וחתמלם מרש נמת צופים:	11 those which are more desirable than gold, even much pure gold, and sweeter than honey, even virgin honey from the honeycomb.
12	גם-עבדך נותר בום: כשלים עמך רב:	12 Furthermore, your servant is warned by them. There is great reward in keeping them.
13	שגלות מר-יני: מנסרות עני:	13 Who can discern mistakes? Clear me from the guilt of hidden sins!
14	גם עתים ו חסל עמך: אל-ישלד-יב אז איתם: וקמל ממשע רב:	14 Also, prevent your servant from committing presumptuous sins! Do not let them rule over me! Then I will be blameless and innocent of great crime.
15	הני לרצון אפר-י: והניו לבי לעמד: יהוה צורי ונאלי:	15 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before you, YHWH, my rock and my redeemer!

The **third-most** prominent part of the psalm is verses 5c-7:

<p>לכנעם חוקר לדוד</p> <p>השמים מקפנים כבודי אל ומשעה לזיו מעד חרסתי: יום ליום יביע אקור ולילה ללילה יתור דעת: אין אקור ואין דברים בלוי ושקט קולם:</p> <p>בכלי תארין זכא קום ובקנה חבל מלומם לשעשם שם אהל קום: והוא סתונו יאא חזקו יששם מנבור לרדיו אמו: מקמה הששים וישאנו ימקשתו עליהם ואין זכאנו ממתונו:</p> <p>לורה יהיה מלימיה משיבה גמט עודו יהיה נפלה מלימיה חנו: ספודו יהיה ימיה מלימיה ירכ: מעות יהיה מורה מארת עינים: יראת יהיה מורה סורה למדות לעו מלימיה יהיה מאת אדונו יעו: הקומים מלימיה וספר רב יהיה מלימיה נקט גומים:</p> <p>גם יעבדו נזר מום לשעלם עקב רב: מלימיה מלימיה מלימיה נקט: גם מלימיה מלימיה נקט אלימיה מלימיה מלימיה אלימיה מלימיה מלימיה יהיה מלימיה מלימיה יהיה מלימיה מלימיה</p>	<p>1 For the director. A psalm. By David.</p> <p>2 The sky is declaring God's honor, and the firmament is telling about the workmanship of his hands.</p> <p>3 Day after day pours out speech, and night after night imparts knowledge.</p> <p>4 There is no speech, and there are no words whose sound is not being heard.</p> <p>5 Its verse line has gone forth throughout the whole earth, and its words [have gone forth] throughout the edge of the world. He has set up in it a home for the sun, and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his tent.</p> <p>6 He is glad, like a warrior, to run his course, His starting point is from the edge of the sky, and his turning point is at its edges, and nothing is hidden from his heat.</p> <hr/> <p>8 YHWH's instruction is perfect, restoring life. YHWH's testimony is reliable, making simpletons wise.</p> <p>9 YHWH's commandments are just, causing the heart to rejoice. YHWH's command is flawless, giving light to the eyes.</p> <p>10 Fearing YHWH is pure, enduring forever. YHWH's rules are true; they are altogether right;</p> <p>11 those which are more desirable than gold, even much pure gold, and sweeter than honey, even virgin honey from the honeycomb.</p> <p>12 Furthermore, your servant is warned by them. There is great reward in keeping them.</p> <p>13 Who can discern mistakes? Clear me from the guilt of hidden sins!</p> <p>14 Also, prevent your servant from committing presumptuous sins! Do not let them rule over me! Then I will be blameless and innocent of great crime.</p> <p>15 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before you, YHWH, my rock and my redeemer!</p>
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- The topic is the **sun**. The psalmist uses two images to describe the sun:¹ a **bridegroom** and a **warrior**.
- The psalmist connects the **sun** to YHWH's instruction.

¹ This is called *personification*.

6. Poetry

- In Scripture, the number 7 denotes perfection. Psalm 19 contains the divine name **YHWH** a perfect seven times.
- The occurrences of **YHWH** and **God** combine to make one of the most important poetic features of the psalm, and the psalmist meant to distinguish them from one another. So, translators should be very careful about rendering these words faithfully.
- Note in the diagram below where **YHWH** (highlighted in purple) and **God** (highlighted in yellow) appear::

<p>לקבצום מקולר לונד השמים מספרים כבוד אל ומשעה ידיו פתח הוליש יום ליום יבש אפר ולילה לילה יתנה דעות אין דבר ואין דברים קול נשקע קולם כחיל נארין אצא מלם ובפנה חבל מילום לשמש שם אלה בתום ולוא בתום יצא מספחו ישש כנפול לרוח ארת מקצה השמים ומצאו ותקופתו עלי קאותם ואין נסתר מחסותו תורת ה' תמה משיבת נפש עזרת ה' תמה לאמנה מתקמת פתי פסקתי ה' תמה עשרים משפתי ילב מצות ה' תמה כלה מארת עינאם וראת ה' תמה ו טהורה טהורה לעד משפטי ה' תמה אמת אדוקי תמונו התקמים מנזב ומפזר רב ומתקמים מדבש ומסת צופים גם יעבדה גונר קום שקלים עשק רב שביאות מייבין מספרות נקני גם מנזים ו חלה עבדה אלי משלרבי אין איתום תשיתי משפטי רב הניו לרצון ו אגרייטי ובניו לפני לעדה תמה מניו ו אגלי</p>	<p>1 For the director. A psalm. By David. 2 The sky is declaring God's honor, and the firmament is telling about the workmanship of his hands. 3 Day after day pours out speech, and night after night imparts knowledge. 4 There is no speech, and there are no words whose sound is not being heard. 5 Its verse line has gone forth throughout the whole earth, and its words [have gone forth] throughout the edge of the world. He has set up in it a home for the sun, and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his tent. 6 He is glad, like a warrior, to run his course. 7 His starting point is from the edge of the sky, and his turning point is at its edges, and nothing is hidden from his heat. 8 YHWH's instruction is perfect, restoring life. YHWH's testimony is reliable, making simpletons wise. 9 YHWH's commandments are just, causing the heart to rejoice. YHWH's command is flawless, giving light to the eyes. 10 Fearing YHWH is pure, enduring forever. YHWH's rules are true; they are altogether right; 11 those which are more desirable than gold, even much pure gold, and sweeter than honey, even virgin honey from the honeycomb. 12 Furthermore, your servant is warned by them. There is great reward in keeping them. 13 Who can discern mistakes? Clear me from the guilt of hidden sins! 14 Also, prevent your servant from committing presumptuous sins! Do not let them rule over me! Then I will be blameless and innocent of great crime. 15 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before you, YHWH, my rock and my redeemer!</p>
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- The appearances of **YHWH** and **God** display a progression in the knowledge of God:
 - The first line of the psalm uses the common noun God (אל, verse 2). This word was used not only by Israel but also by Israel's neighbors for the highest, creator God. So, at this point, early in the psalm, the knowledge of God is general, rather hazy, and ill-defined. This God, whoever he is, is the creator of heaven and earth.
 - The second half of the psalm, however, refers to this God by his personal name YHWH.² Only Israel used this name for God. The divine name YHWH clusters in verses 8-10, occurring six times within the space of six lines. This section of verses identifies YHWH as the God whose covenant instruction is perfect (verse 8).
 - Despite the emphasis on perfection, however, there remains in the psalm a glaring imperfection as the psalm progresses. It is significant that the number seven signifies completeness,³ especially in this psalm where the idea of completeness is a prominent theme.⁴ The fact that YHWH's name occurs only six times in verses 8-10 creates tension and leaves the audience expecting something more in verses 11-14. The tension is resolved in the final line of the psalm, where YHWH's name is mentioned for the seventh time. This time, however, YHWH is not described as the one who commands his people, but as the one who protects and redeems them ("my rock and my redeemer"). In other words, God is not only the creator of heaven and earth (verses 2-7), he is also the personal God of Israel who has given covenant instruction to his people (verses 8-10). But even this description is 'incomplete.' In fact, YHWH not only teaches his people how to be blameless, he also makes them blameless by forgiving their hidden sins (verse 13) and protecting them from presumptuous sins (verse 14), as their rock and redeemer (verse 15).

² This is the name by which he revealed himself to Moses (Exod 3:14-16).

³ Ryken et al., "Seven," 774.

⁴ See the root תמם in verse 8 (תמימה) and in verse 14 (איתום).

7. Participants and Speech Acts

In poetry, it is important to keep track of who is speaking, who is the audience, and what it is that the speaker is trying to do with his words. In the chart below, the left-hand column identifies the speaker, who is David. The right-hand column identifies the audience, which in verses 2-11 is unspecified, while in verses 12-15 is YHWH. The middle column tells what the speaker is trying to do with his words (his speech acts) in each section.

SPEAKER	SPEECH ACT SECTIONS	ADDRESSEE
David	<p>DESCRIPTION OF THE SKY (vv. 2-5b)</p> <p>The sky communicates God's honor to everyone.</p>	Unspecified
	<p>DESCRIPTION OF THE SUN (vv. 5c-7)</p> <p>Nothing is hidden from the sun's heat.</p>	
	<p>PRAISE OF YHWH'S INSTRUCTION (vv. 8-11)</p> <p>YHWH's instruction is perfect; it is like the sun.</p>	
	<p>PRAYER FOR BLAMELESSNESS (vv. 12-15)</p> <p>"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before you."</p>	
		YHWH

TRANSLATION TIPS, VERSE BY VERSE

VERSE 1

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

For the director of music and thus, for the congregation to hear and recite. **A psalm.** Written by **David**, the servant of YHWH (see Ps 18:1; 19:12-14).

לְמִנְצֵחַ מְזֻמָּר לְדָוִד:

1 For **the director**. A **psalm**. By **David**.

- This verse is a superscription. A superscription identifies some background features of the psalm. In Hebrew, this superscription consists of several sentence fragments. For languages that require verbs, the translators can start the verse with the phrase “This is...”
- English translations render the Hebrew term for **the director** in different ways: "choir director,"⁵ "chief musician,"⁶ "music director,"⁷ "choirmaster,"⁸ and "leader."⁹ The essential point is that the director led music in the Temple, and so translators should render the term in a way that highlights the musical context.¹⁰
- The superscription describes this poem as a **psalm** (מְזֻמָּר). The Hebrew word "is a technical term for a song that was to be sung, perhaps with musical accompaniment."¹¹ In order to distinguish a psalm from other kinds of songs, in some languages it may be necessary to add a qualifier such as *praise*, *religious*, or *worship*; for example *songs for worship* or *songs for praising God*. The translator must make sure to translate the key term ‘psalm’ consistently with other psalms and with the way the word is translated in the New Testament.
- The superscription identifies king **David** as the author and speaker.

Gray boxes discuss sections and subsections. The headings (in green) are guides, and not part of the Biblical text.

VERSES 2-7: The Words of the Sky

- The first word is **the sky** (הַשָּׁמַיִם). It is also the theme of the first section (verses 2-7). Specifically, the section is about how the sky declares YHWH's honor.
- The only other use of the word **the sky** (הַשָּׁמַיִם) is in the last verse of this section (verse 7). Thus, the word the sky occurs at the beginning and end of verses 2-7 to poetically bind them together.¹²

⁵ NASB95, NLT, CSB, HCSB, LSB.

⁶ KJV 1900, ASV, Darby.

⁷ LEB, NET, TLV.

⁸ ESV, RSV.

⁹ NRSV, NRSV, CEV.

¹⁰ For more information on the phrase ‘for the director’, see our webpage entitled [Lamnassēah](#).

¹¹ Ross 2011, 40.

¹² This is called an *inclusio*.

- This first section subdivides into two smaller sections. Each subsection ends with a negative statement that uses the same Hebrew term (אֵין):
 - in verse 4, it is rendered as *no*, and
 - in verse 7c it is rendered as *nothing*.

VERSES 2-4: The Sky As a Poet

- Verses 2-4 (and the first two clauses of verse 5) depict **the sky** as a person speaking (using *personification*). More specifically, these verses depict the sky as a poet. This is suggested by:
 - the word **verse-line** (קָנָם) in verse 5, which probably refers to a line of poetry, and
 - the verb *declare* (סָפַר) in verse 2, which can refer to poetic discourse in particular.

VERSE 2

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1)—an act which indicates God's supreme honor and immense skill. On the first day of creation, he made day and night. On the second day of creation, he made the firmament, which he named "sky." On the fourth day of creation, God made the sun, moon, and stars to fill the sky and to govern the rhythm of day and night. And not only did God create the world in this way, he also continues to sustain and regulate this created order. One of the clearest examples of the continuation of God's created order is the continuous succession of days and nights (see Gen 8:22), which is governed by the movements of the sun, moon and stars in the sky. In this way, **The sky is declaring** the honor of the one who created it and who sustains it. It is declaring **God's honor, and the firmament, a part of the "sky," is telling about the workmanship of his hands.** The sky is like a poet recounting in verse the great honor and skill of its creator.

הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֵל
וּמַעֲשֵׂה לְדָוִד מְגִיד הַרְקִיעַ:

2

The sky is declaring God's **honor**,
and **the firmament is telling** about the **workmanship of his hands**.

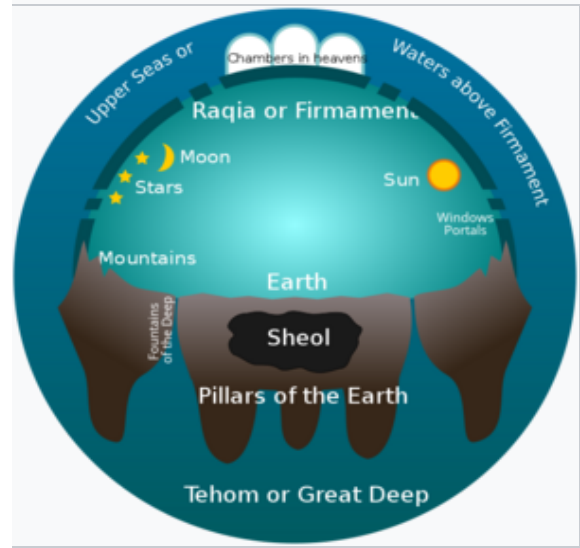
- The phrases **the sky is declaring** and **the firmament is telling** are figures of speech in which the sky performs the human action of speech. In some languages, this will not be possible. In these cases, one possibility might be to render the verbs in these phrases: *is showing/revealing*.
- **The sky** (הַשָּׁמַיִם) is the place where God dwells,¹³ the place where birds fly, and—most important for this psalm—the place where the sun, moon, and stars are located.¹⁴ Most English translations render this term as "the heavens."¹⁵

¹³ 1 Kgs 8:30; Ps 33:13.

¹⁴ Gen 1:15-19.

¹⁵ ESV, LEB, NIV, NRSV, KJV, CSB, NLT, NET.

- The Hebrew word for **firmament** (רָקִיעַ) also refers to areas above the earth, but it is more specific than **sky**. The firmament was one part of the sky "where sun, moon, and stars are suspended."¹⁶ Hence birds fly in the sky, but never in the firmament.¹⁷ The picture on the right presents one possible way ancient Hebrews thought the world looked, and how the firmament fits within it.
 - The two parts of this verse contain a sequence in which the second part carries the idea of the first part even further.¹⁸
 - So, languages that lack a word for 'firmament' may translate it as *the highest heavens, the upper sky, the highest sky*¹⁹ or *the place where the stars are located*. If such options are not available, the translator may treat the term as a synonym for sky.



- The verbs **is declaring** (מְסַפֵּרִים) and **is telling about** (מְגִיד) have some important features:
 - The verb **is declaring** comes from a Hebrew root that means *counting off*.²⁰ The verb focuses more on the *content* of the communication than *how* it is being said.
 - The verb **is telling about** comes from a Hebrew root that means *to place before* in the sense of *communicate, report, inform*.²¹ The verb focuses more on the presentation itself and its effect on the audience (and may also be rendered *make known*).
 - Languages that lack two separate verbs to capture these meanings can use the same local word for both verbs.
 - The verbs are in a form (participle) that stresses that the action is happening in the actual present time.²² Some English translations use the simple present tense, such as "The heavens declare the glory of God."²³ The problem with the simple present translation is that it most naturally depicts a general truth and not an ongoing activity that occurs as the psalmist speaks.
- The first line of the psalm uses the noun **God** (אֱלֹהִים) instead of the proper name YHWH.

¹⁶ SDBH, see Gen 1:15-19.

¹⁷ Rather, birds fly *upon the face* or *in front of* the רָקִיעַ (Gen 1:20); Seely 1991, 237.

¹⁸ Kugel 1981, 51.

¹⁹ Hausa Common Language Bible has *sammai* (the skies) in the first part of the verse and *sararin sama* (the highest sky) in the second part.

²⁰ TDOT vol 10, 310.

²¹ TDOT vol 9, 175.

²² They are participles.

²³ NIV; see ESV, NLT, NET.

- This term for **God** (אֱלֹהִים) was used even by Israel's neighbors for "the highest God, creator of heaven and earth."²⁴ To translate this word, the translator may use the same word as is used to translate Elohim (see אֱלֹהִים in Gen 1).
- Only in the second half of the psalm does the psalmist use the proper name **YHWH**. For more on the deep significance of divine names and titles in this psalm, see the notes on verse 15.
- The topic of the sky's poem is God's **honor** (כְּבוֹד), which is often translated as "glory" (NIV, ESV, NLT, GNT, NET). The key word 'honor' means God's excessively high status as Creator. In some languages translators should render the phrase as a verbal idea, such as the passive voice phrase *the honor that is given to God* or the active voice phrase *the honor that God has*.
- The context suggests that the phrase **the workmanship of his hands** (וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו) refers to the *quality* of his workmanship ("his craftsmanship" NLT), and not just to the product which he has created ("what he has done" GNT, CEV). In Scripture, YHWH does not have physical hands; rather, YHWH's *hands* are an image that generally represents his power, including his power to protect his people or to win in battle. Here YHWH's *hands* are a symbol for his creative power.²⁵
 - In languages "where it is possible to keep the imagery of God's hands, it should be done."²⁶
 - In languages that require a verbal idea, *the workmanship that his hands make* or *what he makes with his hands* is appropriate.

VERSE 3

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

*In what way is the sky declaring God's honor and skill? It is **Day after day**, i.e., the continued rhythm of day to day, that **pours out speech**, and it is **night after night** that **imparts knowledge**, a knowledge about God, the creator, the possessor of infinite honor and skill. In other words, the sky communicates God's honor and skill through the orderly succession of days and nights and the consequent movements of the sun, moon, and stars. As we see these celestial bodies move across the sky in perfect order and radiant beauty, we are reminded of the honor and skill of the creator. The "rhythm" of the sky's poem is the rhythm of day and night.*

יוֹם אַחֲרֵי יוֹם יִפְּרֹץ אָמַר וַלְלֵילָה לְלֵילָה יִתְּנָה דַעַת׃	3	Day after day pours out speech, and night after night imparts knowledge.
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- In Hebrew, the phrases **day after day** and **night after night** are each in an unusual order. They are placed in the front position of their clauses, which is the place usually reserved for a verb. This unusual order shows that they are the answer to a question that was raised in the mind of the psalmist by verse 2, namely, "how is it that the sky is speaking?" Verse 3 answers and explains *how* the sky declares God's glory.
 - The phrase we have rendered **day after day** is a figure of speech that means the continuous, orderly succession of days. The translator may render this as *one day following the next day*. The phrase **night**

²⁴ SDBH.

²⁵ TDOT vol 5, 420.

²⁶ Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 189.

after night similarly means the continuous, orderly succession of nights: *one night following the next night*. These phrases are understood to function in a variety of different ways in English translations:

- According to the GNT, **day** (יִום) serves as the subject of the first verb, while the phrase **to day** (לְיִום) modifies that verb (as an *adverbial phrase*). Similarly, **night** serves as the subject of the second verb, and the phrase **to night** modifies that verb. This results in the rendering: 'Each day announces it to the following day; each night repeats it to the next.'
- According to the NIV, the phrases **day after day** and **night after night** modify their verbs, and the subject of each clause is the 'sky'/'firmament' from the previous verse.²⁷ This results in the rendering: 'Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.' However, if this interpretation were correct, we would expect plural verbs to match the plural group of 'sky' (הַשָּׁמַיִם, plural) and 'firmament' (הַרְקִיעַ) in the previous verse. All of the other times pronouns are used to refer to 'sky'/'firmament', those pronouns are plural (such as *their verse-line* in verse 5a, or *in them* in verse 5c).
- The preferred interpretation is that the phrase **day after day** (יִום אַחֲרֵי יוֹם) serves as the subject of the verb 'pours out', and the phrase **night after night** (לַיְלָה אַחֲרֵי לַיְלָה) serves as the subject of the verb 'imparts'.²⁸ In some cultures, the idea that the days and nights can communicate as though they were people might be odd. A possible solution is to make the comparison to people overt by adding the word *like*; for example, "the days pour out speech like a person speaking."²⁹
- The word **and** functions to connect the two clauses of the verse.
- The verb translated **pours out** (יָבִיעַ) is a relatively rare, poetic verb of speech.³⁰
 - It literally means "to cause to bubble up" and often refers to "bubbling up words."³¹ The image is that a person's mouth is like a spring, and their words are like water continuously pouring out. In this case, however, the 'person' speaking is the sky.
 - With verbs of speaking, some languages may demand that the translator identify the audience. The implied audience in both clauses is *all people*.
- The word **speech** does not mean a prepared public address, but simply "the act of speaking."³² This word also appears in the next verse.
- The verb translated **imparts** (הִגִּידָהּ) is close in meaning to the word 'declare' (הִגִּידָהּ) in verse 2.
- The Hebrew word for **knowledge** (דַּעַת) can be very general in terms of the *kind* of knowledge involved. Based on context, here it most likely refers to *knowledge about God* or *knowledge from God*.³³ Translators

²⁷ See NLT, NET; so IBHS 31.3b; Rashi. See the use of similar phrases: יום יום (e.g., Gen 39:10; Exod 15:16; Isa 58:2; Ps 61:9; 68:20; Prov 8:30, 34), מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם (e.g., Ps 96:2), יום אַחֲרֵי יוֹם (I Chr 16:23), or לְיוֹם בְּיוֹם (II Chr 24:11).

²⁸ This interpretation is different from that of the NIV, which is unlikely grammatically, and that of the GNT. According to the NIV, the subject of each clause is "the sky/firmament" from the previous verse, and the phrases "day after day" and "night after night" are adverbial: "Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge." According to the GNT, the subject of the first clause is "day" (יִום), and the prepositional phrase "to day" (לְיִום) is adverbial: "Each day announces it to the following day; each night repeats it to the next."

²⁹ This adds a simile to make the meaning clear. Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 189.

³⁰ See Pss 59:8; 78:2; 94:4; 119:171; 145:7.

³¹ SDBH.

³² Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 190.

³³ Hosea 4:1; 6:6; Prov 2:5.

should check to ensure that the local language term they choose does not have strong connotations to another kind of knowledge.

VERSE 4

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

And the sky's poem is heard by everyone. **There is no speech, and there are no words whose sound is not being heard.**
Everyone hears and understands the sky's poem, no matter where they live or what language they speak.

אֵין־אָמַר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים לְלִי וְשָׁמַע קוֹלָם:	4	There is no speech , and there are no words whose sound is not being heard .
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- This verse means that all the **words** that the sky speaks *are heard*; not a word goes unheard. This interpretation is different from the NIV's rendering, which refutes that the sky's speech and words exist or are heard.³⁴ The NIV rendering does not fit the context, since the surrounding verses stress that nature communicates.³⁵
- The Hebrew term we have rendered as **speech** (see also the note in verse 3) often just means *word*.³⁶ So, the basic sense of the term is synonymous with the term for 'words'. The main difference between the two terms in this verse is that 'speech' occurs here as a singular collective noun while the term 'words' is plural.
 - Thus, the phrases 'there is no speech' and 'there are no words' are synonymous and employed for poetic repetition. The purpose of this repetition is for emphasis. Languages that lack the ability to differentiate these two phrases may employ a variety of strategies to retain the poetic emphasis:
 - simply repeat the same phrase twice, if doing so communicates emphasis in the local language.
 - render only one of the phrases, but add emphasis in another way; for example: *there is absolutely no speech*. If this strategy is employed, it would be best to use the same local word that was used to translate 'speech' in verse 3.
- The word **whose** does not appear in the Hebrew, but we have supplied it in our rendering to create a smooth English translation. The translator will likely need to supply the word 'whose' (or other relative clause marker), since the word does not appear in Hebrew. This is not uncommon when translating from Hebrew.³⁷

³⁴ It also goes against Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 190. The LXX (which Paul quotes in Rom 10:18) translates this passage to say that the 'sound' and 'words' go into all the earth; this fits with our interpretation that the sounds are heard.

³⁵ The sky "declaring" (verse 2a), "telling" (verse 2b), "pouring out words" (verse 3a), "imparting knowledge" (verse 3b), sending out a "verse-line" (verse 5a), and speaking "words" (verse 5b). It would not make sense for the psalmist to interrupt this poetic language with the dull and obvious assertion that the language is not literal.

³⁶ DCH.

³⁷ This occurs in many places, including asyndetic relative clauses like this one (IBHS §19.6). The ancient versions such as the LXX, Jerome, Peshitta, and Targum supplied a relative particle.

- The word **heard** is in the passive voice in Hebrew. In some languages, the translator will need to use the active voice in the second clause and supply a subject: *whose sound people do not hear*.
- A possible rendering of the verse is: *there is no speech or word (uttered by the sky) whose sound people do not hear*.
- It is best to retain the negative statements in order to remain as close as possible to the text, but for languages in which this is not feasible, a positive paraphrase might be something like *people can hear all of the sky's words*.

Gray boxes discuss sections and subsections. The headings (in green) are guides, and not part of the Biblical text.

VERSES 5-7: The Sun

- This part is about how the communication of **the sky**, and of the **sun** in particular, goes out to the very ends of the world. The repetition of Hebrew roots that mean *go out* (יצא) and **edge** (קצה) bind the section together.

VERSE 5

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

Its verse line has gone forth throughout the whole earth, so that everyone hears this heavenly poem, **and its words [have gone forth] throughout the edge of the world**.

The greatest of the sky's lights which governs the passage of time and thus declares God's honor is the sun. The sun lives in the sky, because that is where God placed it. He has set up in it, that is, in the sky, a home for the sun.

בְּכֹל-הָאָרֶץ יָצָא קוֹם וּבְקֶצֶה תְּבֵל מְלִיקָה לְשֶׁמֶשׁ שָׁם-אֵהָל בָּהֶם	5	Its verse line has gone forth throughout the whole earth, and its words [have gone forth] throughout the edge of the world. He has set up in it a home for the sun,
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- The first section (verses 2-4) began with the word **the sky** (הַשָּׁמַיִם, verse 2a). The second section (verses 5-7) begins in Hebrew with the word 'the earth' (הָאָרֶץ). Together, 'earth' (verse 5a) and 'the sky' (verse 2a) cover all of creation (see Gen 1:1), and so the message about YHWH's glory fills the entire cosmos.
- The previous verse stated in negative terms that *not* a single word of the heavens goes unheard. Verse 5 now states in positive terms that their words *have* gone forth throughout 'the whole earth' (verse 5a), to the very edge of the world (verse 5b). There is no place on earth where their words are not heard.
- The pronouns translated **its** (in the first line) and **it** (in the third line) refer to 'the sky' from verse 2.³⁸ The translator may need to supply 'the sky' here instead of these pronouns. In some language, the first two pronouns, which are possessive, may need to be rephrased as verbal phrases. For example, *the sky has a*

³⁸ This interpretation fits with Genesis 1, where God places the sun "in the firmament of the sky" (Gen 1:17). In Hebrew, the pronouns in Ps 19:5 are plural, which matches the plural form of the Hebrew word for 'the sky' (הַשָּׁמַיִם).

verse-line that has gone forth throughout the whole earth and the sky has words that have gone forth throughout the edge of the world.

- The word **verse-line** (קָוִים) is controversial. The NIV renders it *voice* and the NLT renders it *message*. But it most likely is an image that means a *line of writing* and, specifically, a *line of poetry*, that is, a ‘verse-line’.³⁹ Though *verse-line* is preferred, *message* could be used in translation. Languages that lack these concepts may render the word with a verbal notion, such as *what the sky says*.
- The phrase **throughout the edge of the world** (בְּקֵצֵה תְּהִלָּה) has some important features:
 - This phrase assumes a worldview in which the inhabited world has a specific boundary or end. The meaning of this phrase is that the scope of places where the sound goes is *everywhere*. So, it has the same meaning as the previous phrase ‘throughout the whole earth.’ The two phrases combine for poetic repetition. Thus, cultures that are not able to express the idea of ‘the edge of the world’ may render it *throughout the whole earth*.
 - Most English translations use the gloss “to” for the initial preposition (בְּ).⁴⁰ But the Hebrew preposition indicates location or movement *within*. The problem goes away, however, when we understand that the Hebrew word for **edge** is not just a thin border, but a space (see Gen 23:9) and that ‘the edge’ of the world is a large space. Just as the words of the heavens can travel *within* or throughout the whole earth, so they can travel *within* or throughout the world’s ‘edge’.
 - The word **world** (תְּהִלָּה) is a poetic synonym of ‘earth’ (אֶרֶץ) in the first clause. It refers to “the earth as opposed to the sky, with special focus on the area that is inhabited by humans.”⁴¹ English translations tend to use the parallel “earth//world”⁴² or “world//earth”.⁴³
- The word **words** (מִלִּימָה) is a synonym for the ‘words’ (דְּבָרִים) from verse 4a. It does not necessarily refer to written words.
- The pronoun **He** in verse 5c refers to **God** (אֱלֹהִים) from verse 2a. So, the translator may supply the word **God** if it is necessary for understanding. But the translator should avoid supplying the personal name ‘YHWH’ here, since the number of instances of ‘YHWH’ (7) is important to the structure of the psalm (see the notes on verse 15).
- The phrase **he set up...a home** may also be rendered as *he pitched a tent* (LEB, NIV, CSB, NET), *he placed a tent* (NASB), *he set a tent* (NRSV), or *he made a home* (NLT).
- The image of **a home for the sun** uses the language of a person’s home to describe the *location* of the sun.
 - In some cultures, it may be difficult to express the idea that a non-living object like the sun can have a home. In this case, a possible alternative might be *a place for the sun to stay* or *a place where the sun stays*.
 - In verse 5c, the phrase **for the sun** appears in an unusual position in Hebrew. It is placed at the front of its clause, before the verb. This shows that the sun is a new topic or theme in the psalm. The sun is

³⁹ See DCH on קָוִים; see Marböck 1970. For an in-depth discussion of the issue, see [The Text and Meaning of Ps 19:5a](#).

⁴⁰ NIV, NLT, KJV, ESV, NET.

⁴¹ SDBH.

⁴² KJV, ESV, NIV, NLT, CEV.

⁴³ GNT.

then the topic throughout verses 5c-7. The preposition ‘for’ indicates that the sun is the one who has received the home that God set up in the sky.

VERSE 6

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

In the morning, the sun wakes up and leaves his tent, his home, with joy, and so he is like a newly married bridegroom, strong and joyful, coming out of his tent on the morning after his wedding. He is glad, not only like a bridegroom, but also like a great warrior, to run his course. The sun, as the ruler of the day (Gen 1:16), is like a great warrior, and great warriors are excellent runners, who love to run long distances and exercise their athletic ability.

<p>וְהוּא כִּתְּחֵן יֵצֵא מִחֻפְתּוֹ יְעִישׂ כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוּץ אֲרָח:</p>	6	<p>and he is like a bridegroom coming out of his tent. He is glad, like a warrior, to run his course.</p>
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- The pronoun **he** in each clause no longer refers to **God** (אֱלֹהִים), as it did in the previous verse. Instead, it now refers to ‘the sun’ from verse 5c.
 - In some languages, the translator may need to substitute the proper noun *the sun* in place of *he* to make the meaning clear.
- Verse 6 introduces two important poetic images, both of which begin with the preposition **like** (כְּ). Both of the images (**bridegroom** and **warrior**) are associated with joy.
 - The first image compares the rising sun to a newly-married **bridegroom coming out of his tent** on the morning after his wedding. The image is one of **joyful radiance**, and translators should try to make this emotion clear.
 - The word for ‘tent’ (or *canopy*) is similar to, but not the same as, the word for ‘home’ (אֶתֶּלֶק) in the previous verse. It refers to a "temporary construction made of cloth" that was set up "for a newly married couple."⁴⁴ It likely "was a special tent where the marriage was consummated."⁴⁵
 - For cultures that do not have this concept, a possible rendering is *like a newly-married man coming out from the place he spent the first night with his wife*.
 - The word ‘coming out’ that describes the bridegroom is from the same Hebrew root (יָצָא) as the verb ‘has gone forth’ that describes the sun in verse 5a. Thus, the psalmist draws a connection between the ‘verse-line’ that goes out in verse 5a and ‘the sun’ that goes out in verse 6a. Both go everywhere, and their impact is everywhere. Translators should attempt to use the same word in both places, if possible.
 - The pronoun *his* in the phrase ‘his tent’ refers to the bridegroom.
 - In verse 6b, the image of the sun as a **bridegroom** shifts to an image of the sun as a **warrior** (גִּבּוֹר).

⁴⁴ SDBH.

⁴⁵ TWOT #710; Waltke 2010, 363.

- The word for ‘warrior’ (גִּבּוּר) refers to "a human being... who is renowned for his characteristics, such as physical strength, power, bravery, skill, wealth, good character, or a combination thereof."⁴⁶ Because the verb 'run' (רָץ) is elsewhere associated with warriors (see Joel 2:7; Job 16:14), the word here probably refers to a warrior, and not just an "athlete" (NLT) or "champion" (NIV). In particular, it might refer to the sun as a warrior-king.⁴⁷ Local languages should choose a word that refers to someone who is brave in warfare.
- Like the image of the bridegroom, the image of the warrior is full of *life and joy*. Verse 6b even uses the verb **is glad** (יָשִׁיעַ). The comparison to a warrior may also signify that the sun is a potential danger to those exposed to its heat.
- The line **He is glad, like a warrior, to run his course** has some important features for the translator:
 - The meaning of the line is that, just like the warrior is glad to run his course into battle, so too the sun is glad to run its course across the sky.
 - The possessive pronoun **his** does not appear in the Hebrew, which literally says to *run a course*. We have added it to help with participant tracking. It most likely refers to the sun and not the warrior.⁴⁸
 - The verb 'to run' normally applies to people or animals; here it is part of a figure of speech (an *anthropomorphism*) that describes *the sun's travel across the sky*. Languages in which the idea of the sun *running* would be unintelligible may substitute a word like *go* here: *He is glad, like a warrior, to go on his course*.
 - The image of the **course** refers to the fixed path that the sun travels every day. This will be important in the next verse.

VERSE 7

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

His starting point is from the eastern edge of the sky, and his turning point is at its edges in the west, at which point he turns around and travels through the underworld to return to his starting point for the next day. The sun's course spans the universe, **and so nothing is hidden from his heat.**

<p style="text-align: center;">מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצְאוֹ וּתְקוּפָתוֹ עַל-קְצוֹתָם וְאֵיךְ נִסְתָּר מִחֶמְתּוֹ:</p>	7	<p>His starting point is from the edge of the sky, and his turning point is at its edges, and nothing is hidden from his heat.</p>
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- The possessive pronoun **his** (i) appears in each clause of this verse (3 times), always referring to the sun. In some languages, the translator may need to supply the proper noun for the pronouns.

⁴⁶ SDBH.

⁴⁷ Genesis 1, for example, describes the sun as the king of the day, (see Gen 1:16; Ps 136:8) and kings were expected to be great warriors who could run long distances (see 2 Sam 1:23; 22:33, 37).

⁴⁸ The verb "to run" modifies the verb "he is glad," whose subject is **the sun**. So, the implied runner of the **course** is **the sun**.

- The first and second clauses provide interesting information about the the sun's course, mentioned in verse 6:
 - The first clause *begins* with the root **edge** (קצה) and the second clause *ends* with the same root. The effect is that the wording of the verse itself represents the sun's course from one edge to another.
 - **His starting point** (הַיָּצִיאַת) means the beginning of the sun's course that was mentioned in the previous verse. The location of the starting point is from one 'edge of the sky'. Since the sun rises in the east, this means the eastern edge of the sky. It highlights the geographical extent of the sun's course. Some languages may require that the phrase 'his starting point' be rewritten as a verbal idea: *The place where he starts to go.*
 - The **turning point** of the sun's course (verse 7b) is the "location where the sun has reached the end of its circuit and from where it is expected to move back to its beginning point."⁴⁹ Thus, it refers to the western edge of the sky, where the sun begins to turn around and make its nighttime journey back towards the east.⁵⁰ Some languages may require a verbal idea to render 'his turning point', such as *the place where he turns around to go back.*
- C.S. Lewis was correct to identify the phrase **nothing is hidden from his heat** (verse 7c) as "the key phrase on which the whole poem depends."⁵¹ The sun's inescapable heat, together with YHWH's instruction being like the sun (verses 8-11), leads the psalmist to recognize his own sinfulness and to pray for blamelessness in verses 12-15.
 - The word *no* in verse 4 was used to say that no words and no speech go unheard. In other words, *all* the speech of the heavens about God is heard. Here in verse 7 **nothing** helps describe the extent as also universal: everything feels the sun's heat.
 - The key word **is hidden** shares the same root (סתר) as the word 'hidden sins' in verse 13. The presence of the same root in both halves of the psalm contributes to the psalm's overall unity. Just as nothing can hide from the heat of the sun, so too nothing can hide from YHWH's sight. Some languages may not be able to render the passive voice; in this case, the translator may render the verb **is hidden** as *nothing can hide from [the sun's] heat.*

⁴⁹ SDBH.

⁵⁰ HALOT.

⁵¹ Lewis 1958, 64.

Gray boxes discuss sections and subsections. The headings (in green) are guides, and not part of the Biblical text.

VERSES 8-15: YHWH's Instruction is like the Sun

- The most significant break in the psalm is between verses 7 and 8. Although the psalm never makes the point explicit, the main connection between the second half of the psalm (verses 8-15) and the first half of the psalm (verses 2-7) is the comparison between **YHWH's instruction** and **the sun**. The idea—and this idea is the key to understanding the psalm—is that YHWH's instruction is like the sun.
 - The descriptions of YHWH's instruction in verses 8-11 could also apply to the sun.⁵²
 - Just as the sun is the source of all physical life on the earth, so YHWH's instruction is the source of all spiritual life for his people.
 - Just as there is nothing **hidden** (נִסְתָּר) from the heat of the sun (verse 7c), so there is no sin that is hidden (מִנְסֻתָרוּת) from YHWH's instruction (verse 13b). It is precisely this inescapable "heat" of YHWH's instruction that leads the psalmist to pray for blamelessness in verses 12-15.
- Three words appear near the beginning and end of this section to bind it together (as an *inclusio*):
 - The divine name **YHWH** appears in the beginning clause (verse 8a) and the final clause (verse 15c)
 - The root that means 'perfect/blameless' (תָּמַם) appears in verse 8a and verse 14
 - The word 'heart' appears in verses 9 and 15.

VERSES 8-11: The Words of YHWH

- Verses 8-11 are bound by the theme of **YHWH's instruction**. The first three verses (8-10):
 - repeat the divine name six times (once in each line);
 - contain almost identical structure in each line (construct phrase, then adjective, then participle);
 - have a similar length for each line (5 words, perhaps an allusion to the Pentateuch).
- Verse 11 is grammatically bound to verses 8-10 in two ways:
 - by the relative marker those which (in Hebrew, this is the *anaphoric article* on הַנִּסְתָּרִים), and
 - like verses 8-10, verse 11 is also about YHWH's instruction.
- The whole of verses 8-11 is organized as an abc//c'b'a' + d structure.⁵³

⁵² The sun, for example, is associated with "righteousness" and "justice" (verses 9a, 10b, see Mal 3:20), with the ability to "give light" (verse 9b) and "restore life" (verse 8a, see Mal 3:20), with "flawlessness" (verse 9b, see Song 6:10) and "joy" (verse 9a, see Mal 3:20), with reliability (verse 8b) and everlastingness (verse 10a, see Ps 89:37-38). Furthermore, a few words in the second half of the psalm appear to have secondary meanings/associations related to the sun. The word בָּרָה (verse 9b), for example, can mean either "flawless" or "bright" (Song 6:6 NIV). Similarly, the word טְהוֹרָה means "pure," but it has associations with brightness (Exod 24:10 NIV). Finally, the word נִזְהָר in verse 12a could mean either "warned" or "illuminated" (see Dan 12:3; Ezek 8:2). See [The Unity of Ps 19](#) for more details on each of these points. Another, more prominent, connection between the two halves of the psalm is the repetition of the verb נִסְתָּר ("hidden") in verse 7c and verse 13b.

⁵³ Quinn 2023, 44.

VERSE 8

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

YHWH's covenant instruction is like the sun. Just as the sun is a perfect source of life and refreshment, so **YHWH's** covenantal **instruction**, which he revealed to Moses, **is perfect, restoring life**. And just as the sun is sometimes associated with reliability and the gift of wisdom, so **YHWH's testimony is reliable, making simpletons wise**.

תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ
עֲדוֹת יְהוָה נֹאמָנָה מְהַקְיֵמַת פְּתִי:

8 **YHWH's instruction** is **perfect, restoring life**.
YHWH's testimony is **reliable**, making simpletons wise.

- The first words of verse 8 introduce the topic for all of verses 8-15: **YHWH's instruction** (תּוֹרַת יְהוָה) and its role in the life of the servant.
 - **Instruction**, **testimony** (verse 8b), **commandments** (verse 9a), **command** (verse 9b), and **rules** (verse 10b) all refer to YHWH's law given to his people. Translators may need to choose the same or very similar terms to render these words. However, if variety is available in the language, then translators should strive to imitate the variety of the Hebrew text. The notes just below, and in the sections on verses 9 and 10, provide more detail on how to distinguish these words.
 - The phrase **YHWH's instruction** probably refers to the written Law of Moses.⁵⁴ Some languages will require a verbal idea to render the phrase: *the instruction that YHWH gives or what YHWH instructs*. Languages that require the content and recipient of the instruction to be explicit might render the phrase *what YHWH instructs his people to do in life*. The parallel phrase **YHWH's testimony** probably refers to "the Sinai covenant laid down in writing."⁵⁵ Thus, this word is the *written record* (or reminder) of the agreement and promise YHWH made with his people. Verbal renderings might include *the covenant that YHWH recorded or the promise that YHWH wrote*.
- 'YHWH's instruction' is described with the key word **perfect/blameless** (תְּמִימָה). It is a "state in which a certain event is performed in such a way that no one can find fault with it."⁵⁶ The same root (תמם) occurs again in verse 14. There, the psalmist desires to become blameless himself, probably inspired by YHWH's perfect/blameless instructions. If possible, translators should try to translate these key words in verse 8 and 14 with the same word or root to make the connection between them clear.
- The clause **restoring life** (מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ, see Ps 23:3) has several features for the translator to consider:
 - It literally means "to bring back (one's) self" or "to restore a sense of well-being," which may include things like "feeling refreshed after a good meal" or "feeling contented because of a major change in one's life situation."⁵⁷
 - 'Restoring life' is also an appropriate way to describe the activity of the sun, which is associated with "healing" (מְרַפֵּא, Mal 3:20) and the restoration of life. Thus, the psalmist uses the phrase 'restoring life' to make a connection between YHWH's instruction and the sun.
 - The verb **restoring** is probably habitual, as are the verbs 'making' (verse 8b), 'causing' (verse 9a), 'giving' (verse 9b), and 'enduring' (verse 10a).⁵⁸ Translations may need to make the habitual idea

⁵⁴ Willgren 2018, 390-1; Waltke 2010, 365.

⁵⁵ Emphasis added. HALOT 791b; Hillers 1969, 160ff; see NIDOTTE; so WEB: "covenant."

⁵⁶ SDBH.

⁵⁷ SDBH.

⁵⁸ All of these verbs are participles.

explicit by using a habitual form, or saying something like *habitually restoring* or *it habitually restores*. The same idea applies to the other verbs in verses 8-10: *habitually making*, *habitually causing*, etc.

- Grammatically, the phrase 'restoring life' describes YHWH's instruction as an adjective does.⁵⁹ In the context of the whole phrase, the perfect nature of YHWH's instruction is *what causes* or *permits* the restoring of life. When a person applies themselves to following YHWH's instruction, doing so restores their life.
 - Some languages may need to make the connection between 'YHWH's instruction' and 'restoring life' explicit. In this case, the translator could supply a conjunction and/or repeat the subject; for example: *YHWH's instruction is perfect, so that YHWH's instruction is restoring life*. The translator can use a similar technique in the other clauses of verses 8-10, which all share a similar syntax in Hebrew.
 - Similarly, the second clause could be rendered: *YHWH's testimony is reliable, so that YHWH's testimony is making simpletons wise*.
- The word **reliable** (נֶאֱמָנָה) could refer to the permanence of YHWH's instruction, but the context suggests that the trustworthiness of YHWH's instruction is the main focus. Both *reliability* and the ability to *make wise* are attributes associated with the sun. The sun is reliable in the sense that it rises and sets every day without fail. The sun is also associated with wisdom, probably because wisdom is associated with light.⁶⁰

VERSE 9

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

And just as the sun is associated with justice and the giving of joy, so **YHWH's commandments are just, causing the heart to rejoice**. And just as the sun is a flawless (or bright) source of light, so **YHWH's command is flawless (or bright), giving light to the eyes**.

פְּקֻדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרָיִם מְשֻׁמְחֵי לֵב מִצְוַת יְהוָה בְּרָהּ מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם	9	YHWH's commandments are just, causing the heart to rejoice . YHWH's command is flawless, giving light to the eyes .
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- Grammatically, the phrase **causing the heart to rejoice** describes YHWH's commandments as an adjective does.⁶¹ Some languages may need to make the connection between 'YHWH's commandments' and 'causing the heart to rejoice' clear. In this case, the translator could supply a conjunction and/or repeat the subject; for example: *YHWH's commandments are just, therefore YHWH's commandments are causing the heart to rejoice*.
 - The second clause could be rendered similarly: *YHWH's command is flawless, so that YHWH's command is giving light to the eyes*.

⁵⁹ Specifically, as a participial phrase functioning as a predicate adjective.

⁶⁰ See Ps 119:105, 130.

⁶¹ Specifically, as a participial phrase functioning as a predicate adjective.

- The word **commandments** in verse 9a (פְּקֻדֹתַי) refers to "rules regulating behavior."⁶² Therefore, the words *commandments* and *rules* are interchangeable. Whereas the previous verse used singular nouns to describe YHWH's covenant instruction as a whole, this clause uses a plural noun to refer to the *individual* commandments of the covenant. For languages that require rendering YHWH's commandments as a verbal idea, *the commandments that YHWH gives* or *the behaviors that YHWH commands* are possible renderings.
 - Verse 9a describes the commandments as **just**. The Hebrew word 'just' also has the sense of *straight* or *upright*. As in the previous verse, the attribute here is also appropriate to the sun. In ancient Israelite thought, the sun was closely associated with righteousness and law.⁶³
 - Verse 9a also describes the commandments as *causing the heart to rejoice*. In the area where the Bible was written (the Ancient Near East), the sun was also associated with causing the heart to rejoice (מְשַׂמְּחֵי לֵב).
- In English, the **heart** (לֵב) is the place of a person's *emotions* and *desires*. The Hebrew word, by contrast, is the place where *both* thoughts/reasoning *and* emotions happen.⁶⁴ The translator should attempt to find a word that comes closer to this Hebrew meaning than the English one. In some languages, this may not be the heart, but may be another part of the body. This word will also appear in verse 15.
- The word **command** in verse 9b (מִצְוָה) refers to all of YHWH's covenant instruction as though it were a single command (it is a singular *collective* noun).
- The word **flawless** (בְּרָה) is basically synonymous with the word **perfect** in verse 8a, but it does have some nuances that may set it apart. Interestingly, this word also has associations with the sun - elsewhere it probably means *bright*.⁶⁵ The *brightness* of YHWH's command explains why it is able to "give light to the eyes." So, if the translator has trouble finding a word in the local language for *flawless* that is different from the word for *perfect*, the word *bright* could be an option that would reflect the variety of the Hebrew text.
- **Light to the eyes** is a figure of speech. In Hebrew thought, this kind of light was not like the light that a lamp sheds upon a path at night; instead, it was a light *inside* someone that indicated renewed life and energy.⁶⁶ So, the phrase 'giving light to the eyes' (מְאִירַת עֵינַיִם) in verse 9b is basically synonymous with the phrase 'restoring life' in verse 8a. Still, the translator should attempt to retain the uniqueness of each expression if possible.

⁶² SDBH.

⁶³ See Mal 3:20. The same association held throughout the broader Ancient Near Eastern world; see the Verse-by-Verse notes on this word for more references.

⁶⁴ SDBH.

⁶⁵ See Song of Songs 6:10: "bright (בְּרָה) as the sun" (NIV). Some English translations render the term in Ps 19:9 as *radiant* (NIV, CSB) or *shine brightly* (CEV).

⁶⁶ See 1 Sam 14:27.

VERSE 10

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

And just as the sun endures forever, so **fearing YHWH**, i.e., the commandments, which have as their beginning and end the fear of YHWH, **is pure**, free from all impurities, and thus, like pure gold, **enduring forever**. And just as the sun is associated with righteousness, so **YHWH's rules are true**; and **they are therefore altogether right**.

<p style="text-align: right;">רָאֵת יְהוָה שְׁהוּרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד מִשְׁפָּטֵי יְהוָה אֱמֶת צְדָקוֹ יִתְהַדָּר:</p>	10	<p>Fearing YHWH is pure, enduring forever. YHWH's rules are true; they are altogether right;</p>
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- At first glance, the phrase **fearing YHWH** (literally, "fear of YHWH") appears out of place in the series of phrases which refer to YHWH's commandments. But fearing YHWH is the *goal* of the commandments and the essence of covenant obedience.⁶⁷ So, 'fearing YHWH' can function as a poetic figure of speech for obedience to the covenant.⁶⁸
 - The NET Bible translates this phrase accurately and clearly as "the commands to fear the LORD," and this is a possible strategy for translators also.
 - The word **fear** in Hebrew has multiple meanings. The focus on the positive nature of YHWH's instructions in the section (verses 8-10) suggests that the positive emotions of reverence and awe are in focus here. While the negative emotions of terror or dread may be in the background, they are not the emphasis. So, possible alternative renderings for the phrase 'fearing YHWH' might be *respect for YHWH* or *reverence for YHWH*.
- The adjective **pure** (שְׁהוּרָה) is similar to the words for 'perfect' (verse 8a) and *flawless* (verse 9b). It refers to a state in which events or things are free from anything that would take away "from their quality."⁶⁹ At the same time, the word for 'pure' (שְׁהוּרָה) has associations with the sun.⁷⁰
- Because the commands to fear YHWH are of such a high quality (that is, because they are "pure"), they are **enduring forever**.
 - The underlying Hebrew word we have rendered 'enduring' is *stands*. If the word *stands* is a natural way to convey the idea of *enduring* in the target language, then a possible rendering is *stands forever*.
 - The quality of permanence is also associated with the sun. Psalm 89, for example, says that David's "offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me" (ESV).

⁶⁷ See Deut 10:12-13.

⁶⁸ This figure of speech is called a metonymy. In a metonymy, instead of the thing itself, one substitutes either an attribute of the thing or some other associated thing.

⁶⁹ SDBH, see Ps 12:7.

⁷⁰ "...as bright (לְטֹהַר) blue as the sky" (Exod 24:10, NIV); "You have made his splendor (טְהָרָו) to cease" (Ps 89:45, ESV); "When is the sky seen in its brightness (בְּטִיהָרָה)?" (B'rakhoth 59a [Aramaic], cited in Jastrow 1926. See Eaton 1968, 605.

- YHWH's **rules** are "the individual commandments as well as the summary of the entire law."⁷¹ The Hebrew word we have rendered as 'rule' (מִשְׁפָּט) has the basic meaning of judgment,⁷² that is, a decision by an authority that is in accordance with justice. But when found in the plural and as belonging to YHWH, the term seems to refer to rules that have been established for some time. For languages that require a verbal idea instead of a possessive one, *the rules YHWH gives* may be a possibility.
- The key word we have rendered as **true** (אֱמֶת; see ESV, NASB, NRSV, LEB, NLT) is very theologically rich. It often means *really true* (especially when referring to a report).⁷³ Modern translations also render it "trustworthy" (NET), "firm" (NIV), and "reliable" (CSB). The word is derived from a verb (אָמַן) that means *to be trustworthy, reliable, faithful, enduring*.⁷⁴
- The key word we have rendered as **right** (צָדִיק) likewise comes from a very theologically rich group of words. When referring to YHWH's rules, it means *to be righteous, just*.⁷⁵ When the root for the word *right* is used together with the word *true*, as it is here, it "emphasizes especially a situation that is well established and dependable."⁷⁶

VERSE 11

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

For all of these reasons, **they**, i.e., YHWH's rulings as representing the entirety of his covenantal instruction, **are more desirable than gold, even much pure gold, and sweeter than honey, even virgin honey from the honeycomb.**

הַנְּחִמָּוֹת מְזִהָב וּמְפָז רָב וּמִתּוֹקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וְנֶסֶת צוּפִים:	11	those which are more desirable than gold, even much pure gold, and sweeter than honey, even virgin honey from the honeycomb.
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- Grammatically speaking, the words **those which** closely bind this verse to the previous clause which said 'YHWH's rules are true, they are altogether right' (verse 10b).⁷⁷ In terms of meaning, though, the words 'those which' also point back to all of the previous words used to describe the law in verses 8-10 (such as 'instruction,' 'testimony,' 'commandments,' etc.).⁷⁸ In some languages, it may be necessary to re-introduce the subject; in this case, it is best to choose a subject that summarizes the words for law in verses 8-10, such as 'YHWH's rules' (see verse 10). The result would be to render the first phrase in verse 11 as something like *YHWH's rules are more desirable than gold...*
- In some languages, the phrase **more desirable** may require a verbal idea with an explicit subject: *those which people should desire more than gold* is a possibility.

⁷¹ TDOT 1998, 94. The phrase might refer more specifically to the kind of **rules** found in Exod 21:1ff ("and these are the rules...").

⁷² DCH.

⁷³ TDOT vol 1, 311.

⁷⁴ DCH.

⁷⁵ DCH.

⁷⁶ TDOT vol 12, 246.

⁷⁷ In Hebrew, the words **those which** are the anaphoric definite article הַ.

⁷⁸ In this respect, "YHWH's rules" is a synecdoche (part for the whole). See Hupfeld 1855, 419.

- The word **even** (ו) in Hebrew normally communicates addition (it is a *coordinating conjunction* that in most cases mean *and*).⁷⁹ In languages that lack a word like ‘even’, the translator may substitute *and*.
- The words **gold** and **honey** are images; their main importance to the verse is that, in Hebrew culture, they were extremely valuable.
 - The first term we have rendered as ‘honey’ is part of the combination of *milk and honey* that was a symbol for paradise.⁸⁰ Importantly, it was the substance that Jonathan ate that *restored light to his eyes* (1 Samuel 14:26-27),⁸¹ which was a figure of speech that meant *it restored life*.
 - So, some cultures may need to find local substitutes for something very valuable (gold) and something very sweet to the taste (honey) that may restore the light to someone’s eyes and life to a person.
 - The first term in each line (‘gold’... ‘honey’) is more general, and each is followed by a different, more specific term to refer to the thing in its best and purest form (pure gold ... virgin honey from the honeycomb). Bratcher and Reyburn suggest that these pure forms may be rendered as something like *gold without any sand* and *honey without anything added*.⁸²

VERSES 12-15: *The Words of My Mouth*

- The major emotional shift in the psalm begins in verse 12. Up until this point in the psalm, the psalmist ‘hears’ the glory of God in the sky (verses 2-7) and thinks about the perfection of YHWH’s instruction (verses 8-11). But in verse 12 the psalmist begins to express “**torment and anxiety**.”⁸³ He realizes his own guilt and uncleanness, specifically with regard to his speech (verse 15), and he prays for forgiveness and protection.
- In this section, the audience shifts so that the psalmist directly addresses YHWH.
- Verses 12-15 are a prayer for blamelessness.
 - The prayer begins with a kind of confession, which is a speech act. The confession contains the following features:
 - By saying that he ‘is warned’ (verse 12a), the psalmist implies that he has sinned and has come to recognize the danger of his situation.
 - By saying that keeping YHWH’s rules bring great ‘reward’ (verse 12b), the psalmist expresses a desire to become blameless, that is, to become someone who keeps YHWH’s rules and thereby experiences great reward.
 - In verse 13a, the psalmist implies he is guilty of errors, since no one is able to discern all errors.
 - Following the confession, the prayer continues:
 - The psalmist asks for forgiveness (verse 13b) and protection (verse 14a) from sin.

⁷⁹ See ESV, NLT NET, KJV [“yea”].

⁸⁰ Ibid., 130-31.

⁸¹ Ibid., 129.

⁸² Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 194.

⁸³ Fishbane 1998, 89. The emotions of the psalmist here are similar to the emotions of Isaiah in Isa 6, when Isaiah saw the glory of God in his temple.

- If YHWH answers the psalmist's request, then he will be blameless (verse 14bc) and will be able to keep YHWH's commands and experience the fullness of their benefits.
- The psalmist concludes by praying in verse 15 that, after having been made blameless, his words and thoughts would be an acceptable sacrifice to YHWH.
- Verses 12-14 are bound by the repetition of certain words:
 - 'Furthermore/also'...'your servant' (גַּם ... עַבְדְּךָ) in verses 12a and 14a.
 - 'Clear'/'innocent' (from the same Hebrew root נִקָּה) in verses 13b and 14c.
 - The word 'great' (רַב) appears in verses 12 and 14 (also verse 11).
- The section is further bound by a similar theme: sin (verses 13-14) and warning (verse 12).
 - Whereas the previous unit (verse 8-11) extols the benefits of YHWH's instruction, this unit laments the human inability to keep YHWH's instruction perfectly.

VERSE 12

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

YHWH's *perfect covenantal instruction has numerous benefits. In addition to all of the things mentioned above, it also does something else: it warns.* And so, **Furthermore, your servant** (by which I mean "I myself") **is warned by them.** When I hear the sky declaring your honor and I sense the perfection of your words penetrating my soul like the sun's scorching rays, I realize how sinful I am, and I am "warned" of my perilous situation (see Isa 6). Although **there is great reward in keeping them** (see verses 8-11), there is only misery for those who fail to keep them.

גַּם-עַבְדְּךָ נִזְהָר פָּהֶם בְּשִׁמְרָם עֲקֹב רַב:	12	Furthermore, your servant is warned by them. There is great reward in keeping them.
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- The discourse particle **furthermore** (גַּם, see ESV: "Moreover...", CSB: "In addition...") opens this new section. The word signals that the information in verse 12a is an addition to the information in verse 11 (and perhaps also to the information in verses 8-10). The preceding verse spoke about YHWH's instruction as desirable and sweet. Verse 12 now introduces new information about YHWH's instruction: it also **warns** those who fail to keep it.
- In this new section, David refers to himself twice as **your servant** (עַבְדְּךָ) in verses 12a and 14a. The phrase is a polite way to refer to oneself when speaking to a superior.⁸⁴ The translator should bear a few things in mind:
 - In Hebrew culture, a *servant* was property, but was not necessarily treated poorly.⁸⁵ The translator should not avoid using a local word for "a domestic employee, or a slave, or one of the many kinds of workers who are bound to an owner through indebtedness" unless the local word carries connotations that the servant is mistreated.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ See HALOT. The term creates a connection to the superscription of the previous psalm, where David is called "YHWH's servant" (עַבְדְּ יְהוָה).

⁸⁵ TDOT vol. 10, 388-90.

⁸⁶ Against Bratcher and Reyburn, 194.

- In some languages, a literal rendering of ‘your servant’ may cause the audience to think that the psalmist is not speaking about himself. In such cases, it may be beneficial to add the first-person; for example, *I, your servant, am warned by them*.
- The one being addressed with the word ‘your’ is YHWH. The translator may need to make the identity of the one being addressed explicit. However, the specific number of times the divine name YHWH is mentioned is very important to this psalm. So, the translator should avoid adding another instance of ‘YHWH’. Instead, adding *God* may be possible, if it is necessary for understanding.
- The participle translated as **is warned** (נִזְהָר) refers to a "process by which someone becomes aware of something (usually bad) that is going to happen..."⁸⁷ It has several interesting features:
 - Here, it refers to the process in which the psalmist has become aware of his own sin (verses 13-14) and the inadequacy of his own speech (verse 15), and he realizes that unless YHWH rescues him, he is in a dangerous situation.
 - Like many of the words in verses 8-11, the word ‘warned’ (נִזְהָר) has associations with the sun. The root זָהַר can also mean to *illuminate*,⁸⁸ and it seems likely there is a double meaning here: the psalmist is both warned and *illuminated*. In other words, the light of YHWH's instruction has shone on him and made him aware of his own sin.⁸⁹
 - Most modern translations and lexicons render the verb in Psalm 19 as “warned”.⁹⁰ The general present statement in the next line (verse 12b) suggests that the verb in verse 12a is similarly a general present (*is warned*, so most translations) and not an actual present (*is being warned*).⁹¹
 - Languages that require active voice and a clear subject may render the phrase: *YHWH's instruction warns your servant*.
- The word **them** in the phrases **is warned by them** and **in keeping them** refers back to the law-related words in verses 8-10: YHWH's servant is warned by YHWH's rules.⁹² At the same time, there are several connections between this verse and the first part of the psalm (verses 2-7) which suggest that the phrase ‘by them’ also points back to the sky (הַשָּׁמַיִם) in verses 2 and 7.⁹³ In summary, YHWH's servant is warned not only when he encounters YHWH's perfect words (verses 8-11) but also when he hears the words of the sky declaring YHWH's honor (verses 2-7).
 - The phrase **in keeping them** (בְּשִׁמְרָתָם) in verse 12b addresses what happens when someone *keeps* YHWH's instruction. This is different from the first half of the verse (verse 12a), which is about what YHWH's instruction does to someone who *doesn't* keep it—they are *warned*.

⁸⁷ https://psalms.scriptura.org/w/Psalm_19_Verse-by-Verse#cite_note-92

⁸⁸ See Dan 12:3; Ezek 8:2.

⁸⁹ See Eaton 1968; Hossfeld 1993, 134.

⁹⁰ See KJV, NIV, ESV, NLT, CEV, GNT, NET, NEB, LUT, HFA, ELB, EÜ, ZÜR; so also BDB, HALOT, DCH, SDBH.

⁹¹ See notes on the participles in verses 8-10.

⁹² The phrase ‘YHWH's rules’ in verse 10b, which stands (by synecdoche) for all of the law-related words in verses 8-10

⁹³ The connections are: 1) the identical phrase (in them, בָּהֶם) occurs as the last word of verse 5c and refers to the sky; 2) the word ‘warned’ (נִזְהָר) in verse 12a has associations with light; 3) in Hebrew some of the words in verse 12b sound like words in verse 2: a) the phrase ‘in keeping them’ is one Hebrew word (בְּשִׁמְרָתָם) that sounds like the word for ‘the sky’ (הַשָּׁמַיִם), and b) the phrase translated ‘great reward’ (עֲקֹב רַב) sounds very much like the word for ‘firmament’ (רָקִיעַ).

VERSE 13

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

Yet how can I keep your rules and experience the great reward that they bring? I cannot avoid making mistakes, i.e., inadvertently doing that which you have prohibited. **Who can** know the entirety of your instruction and how it applies to every area of life and so **can realize mistakes** before it's too late? And in addition to the mistakes I have committed, there are a countless number of hidden sins of which I am guilty and not even aware. Yet you see them, for you are the one who searches the heart. **Clear me from the guilt of hidden sins!**

שְׂגִיאוֹת מִי־יָבִין מִנְסִתְרוֹת נִקְנִי:	13	Who can discern mistakes? Clear me from the guilt of hidden sins!
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- In verses 13-14, the psalmist lists 3 kinds of wrongdoing. The differences between them have to do with the intention of the person doing the wrong:
 - the first category is **mistakes** (שְׂגִיאוֹת). It refers to acts in which the doer knows what he is doing, but he only learns that the act is sinful after he has done it.
 - the second category is **hidden sins** (מִנְסִתְרוֹת). It does not refer to sins that the psalmist knows he has done but is trying to hide. Instead, it refers to sinful acts that the psalmist does without knowing he is doing them.⁹⁴ They are hidden from the psalmist. Even though the psalmist does not know he has done these hidden sins, he is still responsible for them and can be punished for them.
 - the third category is **presumptuous sins** (גַּם מִזְדִּים) refers to acts that the doer knows is sinful, yet he does them anyway.⁹⁵ The word 'presumptuous' means *arrogant* or *bold*, and so these are bold sins that are done knowingly.

In Hebrew, each of these three terms appears in an unusual word order. Each appears at the front of its clause, like this:

- As for **mistakes** (שְׂגִיאוֹת), who can realize them?
- As for **hidden sins** (מִנְסִתְרוֹת), clear me from their guilt!
- And as for **presumptuous sins** (גַּם מִזְדִּים), prevent me from committing them!

The purpose of this list is to cover the entire range of human evil. If the psalmist can be kept from these actions or be forgiven from them, he will be "perfect" in God's sight.⁹⁶

- The question **Who can discern mistakes?** is rhetorical, which means that even though it is a statement *in question form*, it is not really a question *seeking an answer*. The psalmist's purpose in asking the question is to emphatically deny the ability of anyone to know the entirety of YHWH's law, to understand how it applies to every life situation, and, therefore, to be able to discern (and avoid) all mistakes. So, the intended meaning is that "No one can identify and avoid his own potential future mistakes!"
 - For languages that do not have rhetorical questions, the translator may substitute the psalmist's intended meaning. The GNT, for example, says, "None of us can see our own errors."

⁹⁴ See 1QS 5:11-12.
⁹⁵ Milgrom 1967, 120; see Clines 1974, 7.
⁹⁶ Milgrom 1967, 121.

- The verb **clear me** (נִקְוֵי) refers to an "action by which humans or deities pronounce or consider a person innocent or cleared of wrongdoing and freed from punishment."⁹⁷
 - Therefore, although the word *guilt* does not appear in the Hebrew text, the idea of *guilt* is implied by the verb. We have supplied the missing term to aid in understanding.
 - In Hebrew, this verb is followed by a preposition (מִן) that probably indicates detachment. So, it has the idea to "be free (in terms of guilt) *from*."⁹⁸
 - This verb is a command from a human to YHWH, the powerful creator God. Some languages may need to account for the fact that YHWH is superior yet is receiving a command from someone of lower status.

VERSE 14

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

Also, prevent your servant from committing presumptuous sins! Do not let them rule over me! Only then—only if you forgive my hidden sins and protect me from presumptuous sins—I will be a blameless sacrifice pleasing to you and, no longer threatened by the rule of presumptuous sins, I will be innocent of great crime (see Gen 4:7-8).

<p style="text-align: right;">גַּם מִזְדִּים חֲשֹׁה עֲבֹדָה אֱלֹהֵי־מִשְׁלוֹבֵי אֲז אֵיתָם וְנִקְוֵי מִפְּשַׁע רָב:</p>	14	<p>Also, prevent your servant from committing presumptuous sins! Do not let them rule over me! Then I will be blameless and innocent of great crime.</p>
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- The word **also** (גַּם) in verse 14a introduces the final request in the psalmist's plea for blamelessness that began in the previous verse. The word 'also' has scope over the entirety of verse 14a. So, the word 'also' does not just modify the term 'your servant' or the term 'presumptuous sins'. Instead, the word also marks the entire statement of verse 14a as an addition (see the NET and CSB: *Moreover...*).
- The phrase 'prevent your servant from committing presumptuous sins' has several important features:
 - The verb **prevent** means to *hold back, spare, restrain*.⁹⁹ These are possible synonyms for 'prevent'. The verb is a command directed at the superior YHWH by the lower-status psalmist.
 - The term 'your servant' is the same as the one found in verse 12, and should be translated in the same way.
 - The word 'committing' does not appear in the Hebrew text. However, we have added it to make clear that the presumptuous sins are ones that would be done by the speaker and not someone else (see the note below on presumptuous sins). Some languages may not be able to easily render the participle *committing* and may require a fuller paraphrase such as *restrain your servant, so that I do not commit presumptuous sins*.

⁹⁷ SDBH.

⁹⁸ See Num 5:31; Job 10:14.

⁹⁹ TDOT vol 5, 224.

- The word translated **presumptuous sins** (זָדִים) is difficult.¹⁰⁰ Some translations understand the adjective זָדִים to refer to "presumptuous people,"¹⁰¹ and other translations understand it to refer to "presumptuous sins."¹⁰² Although elsewhere in the Bible זָדִים refers to presumptuous people,¹⁰³ the context of the word in Ps 19 strongly suggests that it refers to presumptuous sins and not to presumptuous people.¹⁰⁴ The important point is that the presumptuous sins are a behavior of the psalmist himself, and not of someone else trying to harm the psalmist. Still, verse 14b imagines these presumptuous sins behaving as hostile rulers trying to control the psalmist. The word 'them' in the phrase 'do not let them rule over me' refers to the psalmist's own presumptuous sins.
- The word **then** (אָז) introduces the desired result of YHWH's forgiveness and protection: "(if you do this,) then I will be blameless."
- The key word **blameless** (אֵימָתָה) echoes the word **perfect** (תְּמִימָה) in verse 8a; both words come from the same root (תָּמָה). The word also has associations with the sacrificial system. In order for a sacrifice to be "acceptable before YHWH" (see verse 15), it had to be blameless.¹⁰⁵
- The key word **innocent** (וְנִקְיִתִּי) is a verb (*and I will be innocent*) that comes from the same verbal root as the verb 'clear me' (נִקְיֵנִי) in verse 13b.
- The phrase **great crime** (פְּשַׁע רָב) is rendered in a variety of ways in the translations: "great transgression,"¹⁰⁶ "great sin,"¹⁰⁷ "grave sin,"¹⁰⁸ "grave offense,"¹⁰⁹ and "blatant rebellion."¹¹⁰ The Hebrew word 'crime' (פְּשַׁע) "refers to an outrageous...act" that disrupts "the community on both a small and a large scale" and could be viewed as enormously severe in "the legal sphere, international law, and especially in...relationship to Yahweh."¹¹¹
- With the focus on sin in verses 12-14, the psalm shows a progression from creation (verses 2-7) to commandment (verses 8-11) to sin (verses 12-14). This progression of creation --> commandment --> sin in Psalm 19 echoes the same progression in Genesis 1-3.¹¹² But Psalm 19 ends, like Genesis 1-3, with the hope of redemption. YHWH is the 'rock' and 'redeemer' of his people (verse 15) who will crush the serpent's head (see Gen 3:15) and rescue his people from sin's dominion.

¹⁰⁰ It is one of the top exegetical issues in the psalm; see the discussion here: [The Meaning of זָדִים in Ps 19:14](#).

¹⁰¹ NRSV, EÜ, GNB, ZÜR, LUT, NGÜ, NBS, NVS78P, PDV2017, NFC, RVR95, BTX4.

¹⁰² NIV, REB, GNT, NJPS, NEB, NLT, RSV, ESV, CEV, NVI, HFA.

¹⁰³ See esp. Ps 119.

¹⁰⁴ Its appearance at the end of a list with שְׂגִיאוֹת and נִקְתָּרוֹת; the use of the verb חָשַׁךְ; and the expression *then I will be blameless*.

¹⁰⁵ See Lev 22:21.

¹⁰⁶ KJV, NIV, ESV, NEB.

¹⁰⁷ NLT.

¹⁰⁸ NJB.

¹⁰⁹ JPS85.

¹¹⁰ NET.

¹¹¹ TDOT.

¹¹² These chapters, like Ps 19, describe God's creation (Gen 1), the commandment he gives to his people to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16), and the sin which, once the commandment is given, *rules* (Ps 19:14b) over Adam and Eve and brings them to commit 'great crime' (רָב פְּשַׁע, Ps 19:14c). This tragic story is not just the story of Adam and Eve; it is the story of humanity. It is the story of David who wrote Psalm 19 and of everyone who prays Ps 19. But the story does not end in tragedy.

VERSE 15

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in italics provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in bold.

Let me be a pleasing sacrifice to you, YHWH! **Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, i.e., my thoughts, be an acceptable sacrifice before you, YHWH, my rock, who protects me from sin's threatening dominion, and my redeemer, who forgives all my iniquities!**

<p>הִקְנִי לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי־פִי וְהַגִּידוֹת לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:</p>	15	<p>Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before you, YHWH, my rock and my redeemer!</p>
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- This verse continues the sacrificial imagery which was hinted at in the previous clause with the verb ‘be blameless’. The phrase ‘be acceptable before you’ usually refers to "divine acceptance, often of sacrifice or of people offering a sacrifice to YHWH."¹¹³ Only sacrificial animals that were 'blameless' (תָּמִים) and without any defect were acceptable to YHWH.¹¹⁴ In the same way, once YHWH has made the *psalmist* blameless (verse 14b), then the *psalmist* can offer words which are acceptable to YHWH.
- Literally, the Hebrew text of verse 15 reads: "Let the words of my mouth be acceptable, and the meditation of my heart before you, YHWH my rock and my redeemer." But because the phrases **be acceptable** (יְהִי לְרָצוֹן) and **before you** (לְפָנֶיךָ) usually go together (*be acceptable before YHWH*),¹¹⁵ we should read them together here as most translations do. The NLT, for example, says, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer".¹¹⁶
- The Hebrew verb translated **let...be** (יְהִי) is in a form that indicates that the *psalmist* is making a wish, desire, or request.¹¹⁷ The request is directed at YHWH (whose name appears in the *vocative* form). Translators should ensure that the form of the request makes it clear that YHWH is of a higher status than the *psalmist*.¹¹⁸
 - Languages that require a request to be directed in the second-person may render the phrase something like: *YHWH, cause the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart to be acceptable before you* or *YHWH, make the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart acceptable before you*.
 - Some languages may require specifying the person making the request. In this case, a rendering could be: *I ask that the words...*¹¹⁹

¹¹³ DCH.

¹¹⁴ Lev 1:3; 22:21

¹¹⁵ For example, Exod 28:38; see Lev 22:20-21.

¹¹⁶ NIV, ESV, NET, GNT, etc.

¹¹⁷ It is in a form that should be understood as a jussive, although an indicative reading is technically also possible. As the NET Bible notes in one of its footnotes, "another option is to translate the form as an imperfect continuing the thought of verse 14b: '[Then] the words of my mouth and the thought of my heart will be acceptable before you.'" If this were the case, however, then we might expect another *weqatal* verb (וְהָיָה), as in the previous clause (verse 14c). The clause-initial position of the verb also points to a jussive interpretation.

¹¹⁸ A jussive form indicates a wish, desire, or request when it is expressed by someone of lower status towards someone else of higher status. When someone of higher status expresses a jussive towards a person of lower status, it indicates a command.

¹¹⁹ Bratcher and Reyrburn 1991, 196.

- The phrases **the words of my mouth** and **the meditation of my heart** (אֲמַרְיִפִּי וְהִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי) have some important features:
 - In English, the **heart** (לֵב) is the place of a person's *emotions* and *desires*. The Hebrew word, by contrast, is "the place where both *thoughts/reasoning* and *emotions* originate."¹²⁰ The translator should attempt to find a word that comes closer to this Hebrew meaning than the English one. In some languages, this may not be the heart, but may be another part of the body.
 - In some languages, it may be necessary to render both 'the words of my mouth' and 'the meditation of my heart' using a verbal idea. Possibilities for the first phrase include: *the words my mouth speaks* or *the words that come out of my mouth* or *what I say* or *the things I say*. Possibilities for the second phrase are *the things my heart thinks* or *what I meditate on (in my heart)*.
 - Some translations imply that 'the words of my mouth' and 'the meditation of my heart' refer to everything the psalmist has said so far in Psalm 19. The NIV, for example, has, "May these words of my mouth and *this meditation of my heart*" (italics added). But this interpretation is unlikely.¹²¹ The psalmist is not merely praying that YHWH would find his poem pleasing, but that YHWH would make him blameless (verse 14b) and thereby make his words and thoughts (which represent his overall moral state) into acceptable sacrifices.
- All three of the final words in the psalm ('YHWH', 'my rock' and 'my redeemer') are direct addresses to YHWH.
 - It is common in the Hebrew Bible to use the image of a **rock** to refer to YHWH.¹²² When used this way, the *rock* image is not meant primarily as a metaphor for stability (as in, a rock upon which a house is built), but rather it refers to "a rocky cliff where people could hide for protection."¹²³ So, cultures in which calling YHWH a 'rock' would not be acceptable could consider rendering the word as *protector*.¹²⁴ Languages that require a verbal idea for the phrase *my rock* could render it something like: *the one who protects me*.
 - The primary emphasis of the word 'redeemer' is on *delivering/rescuing* someone from another person or from difficult circumstances.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the redeemer "has the right to claim the ones he delivered for himself," which means that the redeemer is more than just a rescuer.¹²⁶ So, it is essential that translators choose a word that includes the meaning of *rescuer*; if possible, the word should also have the sense that the rescuer has a claim on those he rescues. Languages that require a verbal idea for the phrase *my redeemer* could render it: *the one who redeems me* or *the one who rescues me*.
 - The words 'rock' (צוּר) and 'redeemer' (גֹּאֵל) sound similar (because of *alliteration*) to the words 'acceptable' (קָרִיב) and 'meditation of my heart' (הִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי) in the last two lines of the verse.
- This verse mentions the divine name **YHWH** for the seventh and final time in the psalm. The occurrences of 'YHWH' and 'God' combine to make one of the most important poetic features of the psalm, and the psalmist meant to distinguish them from one another. So, the translator should be very careful about

¹²⁰ SDBH.

¹²¹ Not only because there is no demonstrative pronoun (*these/this*), but also because in the context it is clear that the psalmist wants *all* of his words and thoughts to be blameless and acceptable before YHWH.

¹²² Deut 32:30; 1 Sam 2:2; 22:32, 47; etc.

¹²³ NET Bible notes on Isa 30:29; see Ps 27:5.

¹²⁴ See the LXX.

¹²⁵ TDOT vol 2, 351.

¹²⁶ SDBH.

rendering these words faithfully. See the Poetry section of the Overview at the beginning of this document for important information.

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