

Psalm 23 - goodness and mercy - guardian angels

Barre & Kselman,= Psalm 23,
Call #: BS 1188w66

[Dan Belnap read a footnote to me which quotes Freedman as saying that “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” is a promise that the members of the Council will be with him while he is on this earth]

[This paper is about the 23rd Psalm as a royal covenant psalm. The feast is a royal feast. The suggest the covenant is about inheriting the land of Israel, rather than a coronation covenant.

[There are many references to other psalms in the paper they can be found by searching “{space} ps {space}” or “{space} pss {space}”]

New Exodus, Covenant, and Restoration in Psalm 23

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I. Introduction

Few of the psalms have been studied as frequently and as intensively as Psalm 23. In his commentary E. Beaucamp (1976: 115) lists more than thirty articles on this psalm published between 1934 and 1972. Since the first volume of Beaucamp's commentary was published in 1976, he could not take account of the most recent and most illuminating study of Psalm 23, the one by D. N. Freedman (1980). Freedman argues that the unifying theme of the poem is the new exodus, a theme whose closest parallels are from the literature of the seventh-sixth centuries B.C.E. Among the texts he considers that have significant thematic parallels to Psalm 23 are these.

Yahweh as shepherd (Ezek 34: 11-16, 25-31; Isa 40: 11; 49: 10; Jer 31: 10).

lacking nothing (Deut 2: 7; Neh 9: 21). The text from Deuteronomy is especially significant because, as Freedman notes (1980: 285), it relates directly to the Exodus experience: "For Yahweh your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands; he knows your going through this great wilderness; these forty years Yahweh your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing." In addition to the theme of lacking nothing (1' *hsrt dbr*) it mentions two other themes of Psalm 23, the divine presence (*yhw' hlyk Cmk*) and safe passage through dangerous terrain.

lying down in verdant pastures (Ezek 34: 14-15).

leading and guiding to water and rest (Jer 31: 9; Ps 95: 6-11).

passage through darkness (Jer 2: 6). Another parallel to Ps 23: 4, not noted by Freedman, is Ps 138: 7:

'm 'lk bqr' srh thyyny Cl 'p 'yby t~ih ydk wtws~~~Cfly ymynk

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me.

Compare Ps 23: 4-5:

gm ky 'lk bgy' slmwt . . . s'bt,k wnii'Cntk hmh ynhmny . . . ngd 5,?~ Even when I walk in the valley of deep shadow

your rod and your staff-they alone vindicate me in the sight of my foes.²
the banquet (Jer 31: 9-14; Ps 78: 19).

Because Psalm 23 lacks clear historical references to the Exodus (as in, e.g., Psalm 78), the centrality of the new exodus theme is not immediately apparent. The problem is this: Although shepherd imagery dominates the first half of the poem, what relation to the exodus theme do we find with the abrupt change to the image of Yahweh as divine host in vv 5-6? As Freedman has shown (1980: 275-76), once the *topos* of the new exodus is recognized, the difficulty of the two conflicting images (~ahweh as shepherd and Yahweh as host) disappears, and the unity and coherence of Psalm 23 become clear.³ The opening words of Ps 23: 5 (*lcrk lprny sih,n*, "You spread a table before me") allude directly to Ps 78: 19, where, in the context of the murmuring tradition of the wilderness period, the psalmist cites the people's complaint: "And they spoke against God, saying, 'Is El able to *spread a table* in the wilderness (*lcrk sih,n bmdbr*)?'" Psalm 78 describes Yahweh as the shepherd of his people, leading them out of Egypt (vv 52-53). Finally, Freedman has argued that the concluding statement in Psalm 23 about dwelling in the house of Yahweh is a reference to the goal of the Exodus, settlement in the land of promise.⁴

In this paper we hope to sustain and to extend Freedman's analysis by demonstrating that in addition to the relatively common seventh-sixth century themes of the new exodus, the new trek through the wilderness, and the restoration and resettlement in the land, the psalmist has employed in v 6a the rare theme of the new covenant, appropriately placed between God's provisioning of his people in the wilderness (v 5) and the peaceful dwelling of Israel in the land (v 6b). We shall attempt to demonstrate this by considering both biblical and extra-biblical evidence that will shed new light on v 6, and especially on the verb *yrdpwny*. Finally, on the basis of this evidence we shall show that the exilic author of Psalm 23 has reused traditional royal language and motifs in a new, democratized context, like another exilic author (isa 55: 1-3), who reapplies the language of the Davidic covenant to Israel in exile.

We propose the following translation of Psalm 23.

- 1 Yahweh himself is my shepherd; I lack nothing.
- 2 In grassy meadows he makes me lie down. Beside tranquil waters
he guides me; 3 he restores my life;
he leads me
in straight paths, for his name's sake-4 even when I walk through the valley of deep
darkness-I fear no evil, for you are with me.
Your rod and your staff-they alone vindicate me.
- 5 You spread a table before me in the sight of my foes;
You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over.
- 6 (Henceforth) may only (your) covenant blessings pursue me all the days of my life;
And may I dwell in Yahweh's house forevermore.

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II. The Biblical Evidence

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In discussing parallels to *ynhny* of Ps 23: 3, Freedman makes the following observation: "Another parallel is to be found in Ps. 143: 10(- 11): 'Let your good spirit lead me [*tanheni~*] into the level land'. . . . The first words of the next verse (Ps. 143: 11) are *le~na'an s"mka*; which may belong with the preceding lines, as in Ps. 31: ⁴and our passage [Ps 23: 3]"(1980: 290). The three passages in ~salms 23, 31, and 143 to which Freedman refers do show remarkable similarities.

Ps 23: 3

Ps 31: 4 Ps 143: 10-11

ynhny bmcgiy sdq lmCn ~mw He leads me in straight paths, for his name's sake.

wlmcn ~mk tnhny wtnhlny

For your name's sake, lead and guide me.

rwhk twbh⁵ 'nhny b'rs my~wr lmCn s~k May your good spirit lead me in a level land for your name's sake.

All of them use the verb *nhh* and *lmCn s~kMmw*, while Psalms 23 and 143 share a third element: *hm(g/y sdq = b~rs my~&'r*.⁶ And there may be yet another element common to all three passages, not pointed out by Freedman.

Ps 23: 3 *ky ~th cmdy*Ps 31: 5 *ky ~th m(wzy*Ps 143: 10 *ky ~th)/hy*

For you are with me.

For you are my refuge.

For you are my God.⁷

The pattern of conjunction *ky* + second person masculine singular pronoun (referring to God) + predicate with first person singular suffix is the same in all three: in Psalm 23 and 31, it follows the line about leading (*nhh*) for the sake of the name, while in Psalm 143 it precedes that line.

In addition to the elements shared by Psalm 23 and 143 summarized above, there are also in Psalm 143 two instances where we find a *reversal* of the situation pictured in Psalm 23.

Ps 23: 2-3

Cl my mnhwt ynhlly np!y y~wbb

Beside tranquil waters he guides me;

he restores my life.

Ps 143: 6-7

np!y b~rs⁸ Cyph . kith rwhy

My life in an arid land
my spirit fails.

Over against the waters that revive the poet's life in Psalm 23 is the arid land of Psalm 143, where the psalmist's spirit fails (note wtttp dy rwhy in v 4).

Ps 23: 6 'k 'wb wksd yrdpwny ki ymy hyy
w!bty blyt yhw i~rk ymym
*(Henceforth) may only (your) covenant
blessings pursue me,
all the days of my life;
And may I dwell⁹ in Yahweh's house
forevermore.*

Ps 143: 3 ky rdp)wyb np~y
dk~ l'rs hyty
hw!ybny bmhs~ym kmty Cwlm

For an enemy has pursued me (lit., "my soul");
 he has crushed my life to the netherworld, he has made me dwell in darkness
 like those long dead.

In place of pursuit by the covenant blessings of goodness and kindness and dwelling in Yahweh's house forever is the negative image of Psalm 143, pursuit by the enemy of the psalmist, who makes the psalmist dwell in the netherworld with the dead (Dahood 1970: 323; Tromp 1969: 40). Such contrasts are not unexpected, in that Psalm 23 (a song of trust) and Psalm 143 (a lament) represent two contrasting literary types. What is striking, however, is that the reversal is expressed in language that is common to both poems: *nps~*, *yrdpwny/rdp*, *hyylhyth*, *ws'bt/hws~bny*.

The other passage that, like Psalm 143, forms the reverse of Ps 23: 6 is Ps 7: 5-6.

'm gmlty ;wlmy r w 'h4h ~ tyqm
yrdp 'wby flps~ itySg
i'yrnis l'rs hyy wkbdy lcpr ys~n

If I have repaid my ally with treachery, and rescued my foe
 let an enemy pursue and overtake me;
 let him trample my life to the netherworld;
 let him cause me to dwell in the dust. 10

In Psalm 7 as in Psalm 143, the enemy of the psalmist pursues him to the netherworld and overtakes him.

In addition to the parallels in Psalms 7 and 143, there are several points of contact between Psalm 23 and Lamentations 3. Lam 3: 6 (*bmh~kym hws'ybny kmty cwlml*) is identical (save word-order) to Ps 143: 3c, discussed above. In his commentary, D. R. Hillers writes: "Through vs. 9, the dominant theme of Lam 3 might be called a *reversal of the Twenty-third Psalm.*' the Lord is a shepherd who misleads, a ruler who oppresses and imprisons" (1972: 65 [emphasis added]). Although Hillers does not point to specific parallels in support of his observation, presumably he is thinking of such texts as the following.

Lam 3: 1	the rod of his anger (<i>b!bt cbrtw</i>)
	— reversal of
Ps 23: 4	<i>~tk wm~~~ntk hmh ynhmny</i>
Lam 3: 2	walking in darkness, not light (<i>wylk h~k wl' 'wr'</i>)
	- reversal of
Ps 23: 4	<i>gm ky 'lk bgy' slmwtl' 'yr' rc ky 'th ~rn~v</i>
Lam 3: 6	dwelling in darkness of netherworld (<i>bmh~kym hw~bny kmty ~wlm</i>)
	- reversal-of
Ps 23: 6	<i>w!bty bbyt~yhwh l'rk ymym</i>
Lam 3: 9	he has twisted my path (<i>ntybty ~whY</i>)
	- reversal of

Ps 23: 3 ynhny bmcgijy sdq

To Hillers' observation we would only add that the "reversal of Psalm 23" motif may

extend beyond v 9.

Lam 3: 15	he has sated me with bitter food, made me drink my fill of wormwood (<i>hsby(ny bmrw,ym hrwny lc.nh)</i>)
	= reversal of
Ps 23: 5	<i>tcrk lpny slhn . . . kwsy rwyh</i>
Lam 3: 17	<i>I have rejected peace, forgotten good</i> (<i>wtzn~^e ~w'n nply n!yty twbh</i>)
	= reversal of
Ps 23: 6	<i>'k twb whsd yrdpwny</i>

Finally, at the end of the chapter we find one more important reversal, of Ps 23: 6.

Lam 3: 65-66	<i>ttn lhm mgnt lb t 'ltk lhm</i> <i>trdp b'p wt~ydm</i> <i>Give them hardness of heart</i> <i>as your curse upon them;</i> <i>May you/it pursue them in anger</i> <i>and destroy them. 13</i>
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Here it is not the covenant blessings ('wb wksd) but God's curse that is to pursue and destroy, 14 a motif whose importance will become clear below.

To conclude this part of the discussion, one further passage may be cited.

Hos 8: 1b-3	<i>ycn ~brw b?)'iy UFl twrty p~w</i> <i>ly yz(qw)lhy y~nwk ys'r'l</i> <i>znh yir'l twb 'uyb yrdpw</i> <i>Because they transgressed my covenant</i> <i>and rebelled against my law,</i> <i>while they cried out to me,</i> <i>"O God of Israel, we know you!"-</i> <i>because Israel has rejected the good</i> <i>[i.e., the covenant]</i> <i>an enemy will pursue him. ~</i>
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It is worth noting that the phrase *znh, y'r'l twb* shares with Lam 3: 17 *zn'h* and 'wb, and that *uyb yrdpw* echoes both P55 7: 5 and 143: 3 (*yrdp/rdp 'uyb nply*). As in the passages from Psalms and Lamentations, the point here is that Hos 8: 1-3 constitutes a reversal of Ps 23: 6. Also striking is the explicitly covenantal context of the prophetic oracle (McCarthy 1972; 1978: 220, 289 [on Hosea ~]). In addition to *b~yty, yd(nwk* and *twb* seem also to be from a covenantal *Sitz im Leben*, as a number of scholars have demonstrated. 16 Further, J. Tigay (1970) has argued (correctly, in our view) for the covenantal background of Ps 7: 5-6.

To summarize the discussion thus far, there appear in Psalms, Lamentations, and Hosea passages related to Psalm 23 in a way that might be termed "parallelism by reversal," where one finds the

antithetic or opposite of the sentiment expressed in Psalm 23, and particularly in v 6 of that psalm. In P55 143: 3; 7: 5-6; Lam 3: 65-66; and Hos 8: 1-3, a recurring element has been the verb rdp, several times in a clearly covenantal context. In Psalms 7 and 143, the psalmist, pursued by an enemy even to the netherworld, cries out for divine aid. In Hosea 8, the prophet pronounces judgment upon Israel for breach of covenant: "Because Israel has rejected the good [i.e., the covenan~, an enemy will pursue him." And in Lam 3: 65-66, the poet prays: "Give them [his enemy~ back, Yahweh, what they have coming, for

what their hands have done. Give them hardness of heart, as your curse upon them! May you ~ahweh; or "May it" (the curse)] pursue them in anger and destroy them."¹⁷ On *rdp* in Ps 23: 6 Freedman comments:

The association of the divine virtues [i.e., *twb whsd*] with the verb *rdp* here is distinctive and exceptional. . . . In the background is the mythological picture of the principal deity accompanied by lesser divine beings who . . . will leave their posts in the heavenly court, and accompany the Psalmist throughout his life (1980: 297~98).¹⁸

Certainly this understanding of *twb wh, sd* is possible. And in its favor one might point to Ps 35: 5-6.

yhyw kms ipny rwh wmi'k yhw dwhh

yhy drkm k!k whlq/qwt wml'k yhw rdpm Let them *be* like chaff before the wind, with the angel of Yahweh driving them; Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of Yahweh pursuing them.

In place of *twb whsd* we have the hendiadys *h, ~ whlqlqwt*, and pursuit (*rdpm*) not by divine virtues serving as the psalmist's "guardian angels" but by a hostile member of God's divine court, as his agent in meting out punishment.¹⁹

Despite this possible parallel, we believe that a better interpretation can be provided for Ps 23: 6 on the basis of Freedman's understanding and analysis of Psalm 23 as a song of the new exodus and restoration to the Promised Land. Given these sixth-century themes as the unifying elements of Psalm 23- Yahweh's guidance of Israel through the wilderness (vv 1-5) into the land of promise (*by' yhw* in v 6b)²⁰- we think it more natural to see in *twb wh, sd* a reference not to guardian angels, but to the covenant, appropriately placed between God's care for his people in the wilderness and their entrance into the land.

Certainly there is no difficulty in understanding *twb wksd* as covenant terminology, implying the blessings of the covenant, and even as a virtual synonym for *bty'*.²¹ The difficulty for this covenantal interpretation lies in the verb *rdp*: why does this verb occur in Ps 23: 6 and elsewhere (Psalm 7, Hosea 8) in covenantal contexts?²² Freedman speaks of *rdp* as "distinctive and exceptional" because of its generally negative connotation.

Normally the worshipper is encouraged or advised to pursue such qualities as a goal of life, and acquire them for himself: e.g., Ps. 38: 21 (*Qo~b*); Prov. 21: 21 (*5,eda~qah waheseo*); Ps. 34: 15 (*salom*); Isa. 51: 1 (*sedeq*); Deut. 16: 20 (*s,edeq*). In Ps. 23, the situation is reversed: the Psalmist will be accompanied by divine goodness and mercy (1980: 297~98).²³

What Freedman does not point out is that, of 140 occurrences of the verb *rdp* in the Hebrew Bible, only in a few cases (Judg 3: 28; 2 Kgs 5: 21; Hos 2: 9; 6: 3; [12:2?]) is it used in a non-hostile sense when *t~e* object of *rdp* is a person or persons.²⁴ Indeed, what one might expect in place of *rdp*, a negative verb with overtones of hostility, would be a verb like *n~r*, with its positive sense of "guard, preserve," as we shall demonstrate in Section III of this paper. The fact that we find in Psalm 23 such an unexpected verb as *rdp* signals its importance, given the fact that other alternatives (like *ns?*) were available to the poet.

We can now proceed to suggest a context for the verb *rdp* that explains why the

psalmist chose it over other available possibilities. Significantly, and coincidentally with the *Wortfrld* of Psalms 7, 23, and Hosea 8, the suggested context is covenantal. Note first the catalogue of curses attendant upon breach of covenant in Deuteronomy 28.25 Specifically we are referring to Deut 28: 2 and 15, where the alternatives placed before Israel are obedience to the covenant and blessing~ or disobedience and curse.

Deut 28: 2 *wb'w elyk ki hbrkwt h'lh whiygk*
 ky t~mc bqwl yhw 'Thyk
 And all these blessings shall come
 upon you and overtake you, if you
 obey the voice of Yahweh your God.

Deut 28: 15 *whyh 'm l' t!mc bqwi yhw 'Thyk*
 wb'w elyk ki hqllwt h'lh tvhfygwk
 But if you will not obey the voice of Yahweh your God . . . then all these curses
 shall come upon you and overtake you.

The verb hs~g, which occurs here, is important because of its frequent collocation or parallelism with rdp.²⁶ It is not so much a synonym as a complementary term, a verb expressing the consequence of rdp (i.e., pursue to overtake, a hendiadys for "capture" or the like).²⁷

But the most important text for our purposes is Deut 28: 45, which comes at the end of the long series of curses that begins in 28: 15. Deut 28: 45 repeats the language of v 15 more emphatically.

wb'w (jyk ki hqllwt h'lh wrdpwk wh~gwk ~d h!mdk ky j' ~m~t bqwl yhw 'thyk
All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you, till you are destroyed, because you
did not obey the voice of Yahweh your God.

In this passage, which probably serves as an inclusion with v 15, the curses fOr breach of covenant come upon those who have not obeyed the commandments of Yahweh. Not only is hsyg used, as in vv 2 and 15, but also wrdpwk . . . ~d'h~mdk (a collocation we have noted in Lam 3: 66). M. Weinfeld's remarks on this passage deserve to be quoted in full.

The treaty curses are likewise described as possessing an independent power of their own to pursue those who violate the treaty. Thus, in the Hittite treaties, we repeatedly encounter the formula: 'And the curses shall pursue you relentlessly.' Similarly we read in the epilogue of the Code of Hammurabi: 'May they (the curses) quickly overtake him', and in the Esarhaddon annals: 'the oaths of the great gods which they violated overtook them.' This conception also finds expression in various passages in the deuteronomic covenant . . . (1972: 108~9 [emphasis added]).

The deuteronomic passages he cites are Deut 29: 19 (wrbsb bw ki h'lh hktwbh bspr hzh, "And every oath written in this document will come upon him"), and the two passages with which we are concerned, Deut 28: 15 and 45.

The relevance of these passages to Psalm 23 should now be clear. In v 6 the psalmist uses rdp, a verb that has close associations with the language of treaty and covenant, particularly the language of curse for covenant violation. In a daring reversal, he prays that it not be the covenant curses, but only ('k) twb whsd that "pursue" him (so to speak) throughout his life; here twb whsd is a surrogate for the

covenant and includes the blessings attendant upon obedience to the covenant stipulations.

III. Extra-Biblical Parallels

In the present section of this paper we shall consider vv 5 - 6 in greater detail and shall see further evidence for the understanding of *yrdpwny* adopted here. In particular, we shall attempt to shed light on this part of Psalm 23 by considering a nuzilber of extra-biblical parallels; in this connection note that several earlier studies have brought ancient Near Eastern material to bear on the interpretation of this psalm (Greenfield 1978; Waldman 1979). We shall present evidence to show that vv 5-6 can be correctly understood only when one realizes that the poet has reused traditional *royal* motifs here and fitted them to an exilic setting. Thus the banquet scene is properly a royal banquet, where the (divine) overlord reconfirms the rule of his vassal-king. "Goodness and kindness" are the blessings of the Davidic covenant which safeguard the king. The hope of dwelling "forevermore" in Yahweh's house is also a royal theme, whose precise meaning we shall elucidate presently. All of these motifs have been "democratized" by the poet so that they now speak to the situation of exiled Israel: the royal banquet becomes a metaphor to describe Yahweh's provision for his people in their return to and resettlement in the Promised Land; the covenant blessings now refer to the beneficial effects of the Sinai covenant, and the poet prays that from now on only these "pursue" the exiles; the longing to dwell in Yahweh's "house" (= "temple" in the royal context) becomes a hope for remaining forever in the Promised Land.

Despite the general persuasiveness of Freedman's thesis that Psalm 23 is to be understood in the context of the exodus tradition, some difficulties arise in the second half of the poem (vv 5-6). First, if the poet wants to call to mind in v 5 the feeding in the wilderness, why does he use language that rather suggests a royal banquet? True, *tcrk lpny s'lh~n* does allude to Ps 78: 19 (Freedman 1980: 295-96); but the rest of Ps 23: 5 does not seem to fit the wilderness experience.²⁸ Second, how is *ngdsr"y* related to the motif of feeding in the desert? Freedman adduces little in the way of cogent parallels on this point. Third, the phrase *w!bij bbyr yhw* in v 6 is also problematic. On Freedman's reading it would refer to Yahweh's domain rather than his temple (1980: 300). The instances where *byr yhw* has this meaning were collected and commented upon above. But there is still a question to be answered: Why does the poet use this unusual expression if he "is affirming that he will dwell in Yahweh's holy land for the rest of his life?" (1980: 300).

One is on the way toward resolution of these difficulties once one realizes that vv 5-6 are not a free composition by the psalmist; rather he has adapted traditional imagery to suit his purpose. Specifically, we shall show that the poet has drawn upon the language of royal psalmody and reinterpreted that language and imagery to fit his overall theme of what we shall term the restoration (i.e., the return to and resettlement in the Promised Land).²⁹ This means that we are to understand and interpret vv 5-6 on two levels: the level of an earlier, royal setting, in which the speaker is the king, and the motifs are drawn from the ideology/theology of monarchy; and that of an exilic setting, the level intended by the author of Psalm 23 in its present form.

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We turn first to v 5. While "spreading a table" may point to the Exodus setting of Ps 78: 19, the other images in this verse are hardly suggestive of such a setting. Rather they are reminiscent of royal banquets mentioned in Mesopotamian sources. In the following account Esarhaddon describes the banquet he gave at the dedication of his new palace in Calah.

"GAL. MES u UN.MES KUR-ia DU'-s~nu

ina ~ ta~~la-a-ti ta-ku/-ti (u) qi-re-(e)-ti ma qer-bi-sa u'~~sib-/u-nu-ti-ma
u'-s'a'-li-sa nu-pa-ar-s~un

GESTIN.ME'S *ku-ru-un-nu am-ki-ra s,ur-ra-su'-un*

I. SAG *i-g6-la-a muh-ha-!u'-nu u'-sa'-as~qi*

(Borger 1967: §27 A, VI 49-53)

All the nobles and people of my land

I seated at a festive *table*, at a guest-meal, in its [the new palace's] midst;

I caused their hearts to rejoice, I *drenched*³⁰ their bowels with wine,

I poured choice *oil* (and) perfumed *oil* on their *heads*.³¹

Here, as in Ps 23: 5, there is mention of a table of rich fare, superabundant drink, and anointing with (fine) oil. In both texts the exuberance bespeaks a "royal" host. But who is the "guest" in Ps 23: 5, who declares "You spread a table before me"?

On~the basis of several ancient Near Eastern parallels we suggest that the speaker is the king, in his role as vassal of Yahweh. In the royal inscriptions of Sargon II, the king recounts his treatment of a loyal vassal in these words.

sa- mUl-lu-su-nu LUGAL be-h'4u-nu

BANSUR *tak-bit-ti ma-har~~ ar-ku-su-ma* (Thureau-Dangin 1912: 12.62)

As for King Ullusunu, their lord,

f spread a rich table before him .

The phrase *passur . . . mahar~ arkussuma* is precisely equivalent (save for the change of person) to *trk lpy ~h,n*. By being the honored guest at this "vassal-oath renewal,"³² not only does the vassal reaffirm his loyalty to his overlord, but the latter implicitly reaffirms the vassal king's rule at the same time.

The expression *ngd s,r'y*, which seems awkward in the context of feeding in the wilderness,³³ may also allude to a setting where a vassal king is the subject (see Eaton 1976: 37). In an often cited passage from the Amarna correspondence a vassal city writes to Pharaoh:

LU, GAL~ *EN-nu . . ia-di-na*

NIG-BA *a-na IR-!u u ti-da-ga-lu*

LU' MES *a-ia-bu-nu u ti-ka-lu ep-ra*

(Knudtzon 1915: §100.31-36)

May the king our lord . . give a gift to his servant/vassal so that

our enemies may see (it) and be

humiliated (lit., eat dust) (see CAD D 21b).

The closest OT parallel to this passage is Ps 86: 16b- 17, where the king (see Dahood 1968: 292) asks the divine overlord to send his "servant/vassal" (*cbḏk*) a sign of his covenant favor (*'wt l'whh*) so that his enemies may see it and be ashamed. Another

parallel is Mic 7: 16-17. Here the prophet asserts that when Yahweh brings his people out of exile "the nations will see (it) and be ashamed" and will "eat dust like the serpent."³⁴ In Psalm 23 *ngdsr~* may reflect both the royal setting (as in Psalm 86) and the exilic setting (as in Micah 7) at the same time.

Thus on the level of royal imagery we may see Ps 23: 5 as describing a banquet in which the overlord *~ahweh*) wines and dines his vassal (the king) and reaffirms him as vassal king. The reference to anointing the head with oil in this verse is perhaps a double-entendre: on the more natural reading it would refer to part of the festive ritual of a banquet; but it may also allude to the anointing of the king. Freedman (1980: 297) accepts this latter interpretation with some reservation:

the passage [Ps 23: 5] evokes Ps 133: 2 . . . and to a lesser extent Ps 89: 21 (the anointing of the king)." The association of ideas in the two psalms indicates that Ps 89: 21-25 may be a more instructive clue to the meaning of Ps 23: 5 than Freedman allows. After mentioning the anointing (*bs~n . . . ms'htyw*; cf. *ds~t b£'mn* in Ps 23:

Sb), Psalm 89 goes on to assert that Yahweh will destroy the king's enemies (*styw*, v 24; cf. *srny* in Ps 23: Sb) and that his covenantal *'mwnh whsd* will be with him (v 25, cf. *twb whsd yrdpwny* in Ps 23: 6a).

Given the plausibility of a level of royal imagery in Ps 23: 5, can one justify the postulate of a reinterpretation of this imagery on the part of the poet in the direction of the new exodus/restoration theme? Besides Ps 78: 19, where *'rk s7hn* refers to the Exodus experience, an even more enlightening parallel is Isa 55: 1-3, another exilic poem which joins the theme of God's provision for his people in the new exodus with that of covenant (as in Ps 23: 5-6) and which moreover announces explicitly that the covenant blessings extended to the house of David will now be applied to the whole (exilic) people.

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and he who has no money; come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price. Why do you spend your money
for that which is not bread, and your labor
for that which does not satisfy?
Hearken diligently to me,
and eat what is good (*twb*),
and delight yourselves in *fatness* (*\$'n*). Incline your ear, and come to me;
eat, *that your soul may live*; And I will make with you
an everlasting covenant,
my sure covenant blessings for David.³⁵

Several comments are in order. First, Isa 55: 1-3 refers more clearly than Ps 23: 5 to the new exodus experience. Yet even in this Deutero-Isaiah passage the language is indirect; and as Ps 23: 5 is patterned on royal banquet imagery, unrelated to exodus terminology, so for Isaiah 55 the principal model seems to be either a royal banquet (Sanders 1978) or the banquet given by Wisdom in Prov 9: 1-6 (Begrich 1938: 53). Second, both passages show affinities to Psalm 89/36 and all three passages (Psalms 23,

89, and Isaiah 55) use similar language to speak of new exodus and covenant blessings (*'mwnty whsdy* in Ps 89: 25; *hsdy divyd* in Isa 55: 3; *twb whsd* in Ps 23: 6). On the level of the new exodus/restoration imagery Ps 23: 5 points not only to a new provisioning of the people in the wilderness on their return journey, but also a reversal of the "hunger and thirst" synonymous with the exile (cf. Deut 28: 48). The fate of the people, who had broken the covenant and had been cursed with the loss of "grain, wine, and oil" (Deut 28: 51; cf. 38-40) so that they were "in want of everything" (Deut 28: 48, *bhsr ki*, cf. A *'~r* in Ps 23: 2), will be reversed: now food, wine, and oil will be superabundantly available to God's people when they re-enter the Promised Land.³⁷

The connections between Ps 23: 5 -6a and Ps 89: 21-25 suggest that v 6a, which mentions *twb wksd* (= *'mtvnty whsdy* of Ps 89: 25a), likewise belongs to a royal setting. On the level of royal imagery Ps 23: 5a expresses the hope that the blessings of the Davidic covenant will ever accompany the king.

We have seen that the use of *rdp* in v 6a is unexpected and points to a reversal of the language of curse in Deut 28: 45. But how can this verse then be explained on the level of royal imagery? In what context would the king pray for the covenant *blessings* to "pursue" him? Several explanations are possible. We have postulated that the author in vv 5 - 6 is using material from royal psalmody and reinterpreting it in light of the new exodus/restoration theme. Despite our earlier discussion of *rdp*, is it possible that this verb could have a positive connotation here? We have noted that the verb does occur occasionally in a positive sense. It is also true that in Akkadian, *redu~*, a semantic equivalent of *rdp*, occurs in a positive sense in a passage quite similar to Ps 23: 6a.

u~me-sam-ma da-me-eq-ti u ba-la' ZI-ia li-ir-te~dan-ni

May good luck [lit., "goodness"] and health [lit., "the life of my soul"] follow me every day. ^{37a}

Thus on the level of royal imagery it is not impossible that *rdp* could have a neutral sense in Psalm 23. But on the whole this is unlikely. The fact is that nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible is *rdp* governed by a covenantal hendiadys; and where *rdp* is associated with covenant language the nuance is always negative.

We shall now attempt to demonstrate that the poet has deliberately introduced the verb *rdp* in order to create a more obvious connection with the new exodus/restoration motif. We have already noted that an alternative to this verb was available to him. As indicated above, one might have expected ~ "guard, preserve," in place of *rdp* with its hostile connotation. The verb *ns,r*, in fact, does occur in several Psalm passages and a verse from Proverbs, passages that are structurally quite similar to Ps 23: 6a.

Ps 23: 6a *'k t,wb wh,sd yrdpwny*

Ps 25: 21a *tm wys~ ytrwny*

Ps 40: 12b *hsdk w'mtk tmyd y~r'wny*³⁸

Ps 61: 8b

*hsd w'mt mn yns,rhw*³⁹

Prov 20: 28a

hsd w'mt y~rw mik

In all these texts the subject of an imperfect verb with personal object is a hendiadys;

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in all but one (Psalm 25) the hendiadys is composed of two terms often associated in a covenantal context. In every case but one (Psalms 23) the verb is *ns,r*. All the verbs are jussive⁴⁰ except in Proverbs 20. In two instances (Psalm 61, Proverbs 20) the object is explicitly the king. The word-order is identical in every case: hendiadys + verb (imperfect) + object. In Ps 40: 12 *tmyd* is virtually synonymous with *k/yymy h,yy* in Ps 23: 6a.

Of these texts Ps 61: 8 merits closer attention. The entire bicolon, with the preceding v 7, reads as follows.

*ymym (~ ymy mik twsyp snwtyw kmw dr wdr
y!b cwlm /pny)/hym
hsd w 'mt mn yns,rhw*

Add (more) days to the lifetime of the king; Let his years be like eternity!

Let him dwell in the presence of God forever; Command (your) covenant blessings
(ever) preserve him!

Except for *mn*,⁴¹ the passage is not problematic. It is commonly assumed that in the first colon 6f v 8 *y~b* refers to the king's reign: "Let him sit enthroned before God forever."⁴² But if one retains the neutral translation "dwell"⁴³ v 8a could be interpreted in a sense identical with that of Ps 23: 6b. Further, the expression *lpny 'ihym*, "in the presence of God," should be understood in a specific sense here. In some OT passages the equivalent phrase *lpny yhw'h*⁴⁴ means "in the holy place, temple, etc."⁴⁵ If the phrase has this meaning here (and we shall present further evidence that this is in fact the case), then Ps 61: 8 expresses in reverse order the same thought as in Ps 23: 6.

Ps 61: 8a dwelling forever in Yahweh's presence (= temple) 8b preserved (*mr*) by covenant blessings (*hsd w'mt*)

Ps 23: 6aa "pursued" (*rdp*) by covenant blessings (*'wb whsa*) 6bo: dwelling forever in Yahweh's temple (*byt yhw'h*)

That Ps 61: 8a has reference to the temple is suggested by v Sa: *)gwrh b'hlk (wimym*, "Let me dwell in your tent forever."⁴⁶ As S. Mowinckel (1962: 1.226) and M. Dahood (1968: 84) have shown, this is a royal psalm, and so both vv Sa and 8a refer to the king.

The presence of *n~r* in all these texts, and particularly in Ps 61: 8 with its virtual equivalence to Ps 23: 6b, suggests that the poet has chosen *yrdpwny* in place of expected *y(n)s,rwny* in order to create another "reversal"; as v 5 "reverses" the Exodus motif of hunger and thirst because of the loss of grain, wine, and oil among the exiles, so in v 6a (on the level of new exodus/restoration imagery) it is covenant blessings, rather than curses, that "pursue" God's people.

The intermediate stage between the royal imagery (with *y(n)s,rwny*) and the phraseology of Ps 23: 6a may be seen in Zech 1: 6.

'k dbty whqy . . . hiw' kygw)btykm

Indeed, have not my covenant stipulations⁴⁷. - - *overtaken* your fathers?
Note that the word-order in this passage is almost identical to that of P55 25: 2 la;

40: 12b; 61: 8; Prov 20; 28a: hendiadys + verb + object In Psalm 23 instead of these viliated covenant demands (*dbry whqy*) which spelled expulsion from the land, the poet prays that only (*'k*)⁴⁸ Yahweh's covenant blessings (*t,wb wh,sd*)⁴⁹ "pursue" him and allow him permanent residence in the Promised Land; here he speaks in the name of the exilic community. He uses *rdp* (rather than *ns,r*) because the covenant curses had been pursuing and indeed were still pursuing the exiles. Under these circumstances he could hardly express the hope that the~covenant blessings would "preserve" them, since they had already felt the full wrath of the curses, as Zech 1: 6 shows. Thus, while *nsr* would be appropriate in a royal setting, the author of Psalm 23 found *rdp* more suitable to his purpose. It was too late for this exilic poet to pray that the covenant blessings *preserve* him; but he could pray that, in place of the curses (Deut 28: 45), the blessings and these only now *pursue* him.

In this connection it is important to note that in the Hittite vassal treaties the equivalents of *ns,r* and *rdp* were the very terms used with blessings and curses respectively. "If you ~do such-and-such in violation of the treaty], may the(se) oath(-god)s pursue you. "50 "If you [obey the treaty stipulations], may the(se) oath(-god)s preserve you."⁵¹ In Akkadian copies of the Hittite treaties one finds *hssuru*, from *nasaru*, "to guard, preserve. "52 This explains the consistent use of *ns,r* in passages related to covenant blessings (Psalms 25, 40, 61; Proverbs 20). 53 In the Aramaic Sefire treaties too *nsr* is used in the treaty blessing⁵⁴ as is the Ugaritic cognate *ng~* in a closely related passage. ⁵⁵ Thus it is clear that *ns,r* had become a technical term both in East and West Semitic for the action of treaty-blessings. Returning to Ps 23: 6a, we may schematize what the psalmist has done here as follows.

CONTE _x T	EXILIC CONTEXT	RESTORATION CONTEXT
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May the covenant blessings preserve the king.

(In place of the curses)

The covenant curses have may the covenant blessings pursued/overtaken the exiles. "pursue" the exiles.

Hence this choice of *yrdpwny* over *y(n)srwny* is a clear indication within Psalm 23 of its exilic *Sitz im Leben*.

Against this background, we can now raise the question: Precisely what does Ps 23: 6b mean? First, what does it mean on the level of royal imagery to "dwell in the house of Yahweh forevermore?" The specific intent of the verse on this level is not as straightforward as it might at first seem. As Freedman has pointed out, people did not dwell in the temple on a permanent basis (1980: 300). Nor has Dahood's thesis, that the poet expresses the hope of dwelling "in God's celestial abode" (1966: 149), proved convincing. One clue may be the parallelism of the concepts of dwelling in Yahweh's temple and being preserved by covenant blessings. This parallelism is obvious in Ps 61: 8, where the two ideas form one bicolon. In Ps 23: 6, however, each concept occurs in the first half of a bicolon. Yet since *ki ymy h,yy* (6a~) and *l'rk*

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ymym (6b~) are synonymous, it is likely that dwelling in Yahweh's temple (6bo:) and being preserved by covenant blessings (6a~) are parallel and thus synonymous as well. If this is correct, then the king's "dwelling" in the temple is somehow closely connected to the

covenant blessings.

If such a connection does exist, how are we to interpret, on the level of royal Imagery, the preservation by covenant blessings in v 6bot? One way to proceed would

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be to reverse the image: if covenant curses were to pursue the king, what would be the result? First, as we have seen, the reversal of this image is found in P55 7: 6, 143: 3, and Lam 3: 6: to dwell (not in the house of Yahweh but) in the netherworld. This evokes the idea of sickness or death. Second, the reverse of dwelling in the temple is surely being excluded from it. Thus it could be that the king is praying that he never be excluded from Yahweh's "temple" (Ps 23: 6b) or from his "presence" (Ps 61: 8a) by reason of some illness or disease.

Evidence that this is the correct understanding of Ps 23: 6b is found in several texts that associate the king's sickness with his exclusion from the temple. In 2 Kgs 20: 5-6 Isaiah tells Hezekiah in Yahweh's name: ". . . behold, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of Yahweh. And I will add fifteen years to your life." 57 The text implies that the king was not permitted to enter the temple until his affliction had been cured. From 2 Kgs 20: 7 (= Isa 38: 21) we learn that Hezekiah's illness was some kind of skin disease (*s'h,yn*).⁶⁸ Even more significant is the account of Uzziah, who was "excluded from Yahweh's house" because of a similar affliction. We read in 2 Chr 26: 16-20 that Uzziah had been stricken with leprosy by Yahweh because the king had arrogantly appropriated certain priestly functions. The account continues (vv 20b-2 1a):

for Yahweh had afflicted him. And King Uzziah was a leper till the day of his death, and being a leper he had to dwell in a/the house of quarantine,⁵⁹ for he had been cut off from the temple of Yahweh.

One important aspect of this account has apparently gone unnoticed: vv 20b-2 1a clearly reflect not only the wording but even the sequence of details in the treaty-curse specific to the moon-god Sin-the curse of leprosy.

2 Chr 26: 20b-21a

for *Yahweh* had afflicted him. And King Uzziah was a *leper*

till the day #his death,

and . . . in a/the *house* of quarantine he had to *dwell* (Josephus, *Ant* 9.10, says that Uzziah had to dwell *outside the city (exo tes pole~)63*), for he had been *cut off* from the *temple* of Yahweh.

Sin Treaty-Curse May *Sin* . . . clothe him with *leprosy*; May he be unclean *till the day of his death*,⁶⁰ *As long as he lives* may he be deprived of his own *house*. 61

May he have to *dwell outside his own city*;⁶²

May he [Sin] *cut qff~* his access to *temple* and palace.⁶⁵

In the account of Uzziah we have the clear case of a king upon whom the dreaded curse of leprosy had fallen and who -therefore was no longer allowed to "dwell" in Yahweh's temple. Given this

negative~parallel, the meaning *ofy*~ in P55 23: 6 and 61: 8 on the level of royal imagery becomes clear: it simply means that the king has access to the temple, to Yahweh's saving presence there. Akkadian texts containing this curse do not use the verb "dwell" but speak of one's being excluded from "access" (*ereb u-*lit., "entering"), "s~tanding" (*mazzassu*), or "walking" (*italluku*) in the temple.~

A significant variant to being cut off from "temple and palace," the standard

wording of this curse, is found in the vassal-treaties of Esarhaddon. There the curse reads, "[May he cut off) your entering *into the presence of the god* or king."⁶⁷ It is precisely this phrase that appears in Ps 61: 8: "Let him [the king] dwell *in the presence*

#God forever." This variant provides further evidence—that *lpny 'Thym* in Ps 61: 8 = *b~ytyhwh* in Ps 23: 6.

It is not far-fetched to think that OT writers were familiar with such curses, especially at the time of the exile and later. Weinfeld asserts that in Deuteronomy 28

not only are the curses of leprosy [v 27), blindness, exposure of the slain, sexual violation of the wife, pillage, and the enslavement of children common to both [Deuteronomy 28 and the vassal-treaties of Esarhaddon). They occur in almost identical order.

Although the order of curses in Deuteronomy seems to have no plausible explanation, the sequence in *VTE* is based on the hierarchy within the Assyrian pantheon (1972: 118 - 19).

Thus in Ps 23: 6 ("May I dwell in the house of Yahweh forevermore") the king is praying that he not be excluded by such a curse from the presence of Yahweh. Such royal prayers are not confined to the OT. Two interesting parallels—especially to Ps 61: 7- 8—are found in the inscriptions of Assurbanipal. The first is addressed to Nabu, the patron god of scribes, who writes the tablets of destiny.

ina ti-kip SANTAIQ-ki-ka ke-e-ni
 TI UD.MES-ia' G~D.MES *li-sa-a sap-tuk-ka*
italluku (DU..DUKU) E'.ZI.DA ina IGI DINGIR-ti-ka
li-lab-bi-ra GIR"-a-a (Streck 1916: 2.274: 15-18)
 With a (mere) dot of your faithful stylus may (the decree for) a *lift of long days*
 go forth from your lips for me;
 may my feet grow old *ever walking*⁶⁸ *in (your*
temple) Ezida, in your divine presence.

The second prayer is addressed to Is~tar.

ia-a-ti mdAs~ur~DU'. IBILA pa-lih~ DINGIR-ti-ki GALti ba-lat UD.MES GID.MES ~DUG.GA
lib-bi qi-hm-ma
italluku (DU..DUKR) E'.MAS.MAS lu-lab-bi-ra GiR" -a-a (Streck 1916: 2.276: 16-18)

To me, Assurbanipal, who worships your great divinity, grant a *lift of long days* (and) happiness;
 may my feet grow old *ever walking in (your temple)* Emalmas.

In both of these texts the Assyrian king is praying to be spared the curse of disease that would exclude him from the deity's presence. In other words, Assurbanipal is praying for long life and (with reference to walking in the temple) good health for a long time to come, as in P55 23: 6; 61: 8. Note the expressions "a *lift of long days* (cf. Ps 23: 6: *hyy II 'rk ymym*) and "*in your divine presence*" (cf. Ps 61: 8: *lpny 'Thym*). Other Akkadian royal prayers use similar language.⁶⁹

It may be that in Ps 61: 8 and (on the level of royal imagery) Ps 23: 6 the king is praying to escape other diseases or afflictions besides leprosy. Ancient Near Eastern curses threatened other misfortunes that would likewise exclude a king from the temple. We learn from 2 Sam 5: 8 that "the blind and the lame shall/may not enter into the 'house.'" The LXX translates the last phrase as *eis oikon Kyriou*, "into the

house of the Lord," which probably gives the intended sense of *hbyt* in this passage. In one important collection of Hittite curses the oath-breaker is threatened, "May these oath(-god)s seize him and blind his army." ⁷⁰ In the vassal-treaties of Esarhaddon the curse of the sun-god Samas reads in part, "May he take away from you the power of sight-wander ever in darkness!" ⁷¹ Deut 28: 28-29, which is actually based on this curse (Weinfeld 1972: 117-21), says, "May Yahweh afflict you . . . with blindness

- . . . may you grope at noonday as the blind grope in darkness.

Thus far we have considered Akkadian texts where the king prays not to be excluded from the deity's presence or temple. But the Sin curse cited above also threatens exclusion from palace as well. One of the variations of the curse reads~ "May he be deprived of *his own house*" (CAD Z 1 56b); this was certainly the fate of Uzziah, for example, who had to live in a "house of quarantine" outside the city. Hence we might expect to meet instances in which the king prays not to be driven out of his own house/palace. In the inscription of Esarhaddon cited earlier in connection with the royal banquet motif, such a prayer follows immediately on the banquet scene.

ina qi-bit dA~•ur sa'r DINGIR. ME~

U DINGIR.MES KUR As•iur~' DU'-•u'-nu 'u-ub UZU. ME~ hu-ud lib-bi

nu-um-mur ha-bat-ti

se-b6-e lit-tu-ti q'6-reb~d da-ri~

i:'ur-mi-(i-)ma lu-u~ba-a la-la-a-sa

(Borger 1967: §27 A, VI 54-57)

By the command of Assur, king of the gods, and all the gods of Assyria,
may I in health, happiness, exhilaration, (and) fullness of old age *forever dwell* in it [my new *palace*] (and) enjoy its splendor.

This text from the inscriptions of Esarhaddon presents the same sequence of details as in Ps 23: 5-6: royal banquet, blessings, prayer for long life in a house/temple.

Another feature common to P55 23: 6, 61: 8, and the pertinent lines of Assurbanipal's prayers (that he might walk in the presence/temple of the deity throughout a "life of long days") is that these verses come at the end of the text. This is the standard position of blessings for the king in West Semitic royal inscriptions. ⁷² Hence we are to understand Ps 23: 6 as a blessing for the king like Ps 61: 8. The verbs are therefore to be taken as precatives, as in all the other texts mentioned above. Freedman has argued that in Ps 27: 4 (*5'bty hbyt yhwh // ki ymy 4yy*) "instead of the infinitive construct, *s'ibti*, it is better to read *sabt4* as in Ps. 23, and interpret the verb as the precative perfect" (1980: 299). We agree with his interpretation of Ps 27: 4 but would go further and argue for the same interpretation of the verb in Ps

23: 6. Because this verse is in fact a blessing and is synonymous with Ps 61: 8 (where *ys"b⁷³* and *yns,rwhw* are jussive), *yrdpwny* and *s'bty* ought also to be translated as precatives.

This interpretation of the syntax of the verbs in these passages from the Psalter, and indeed, our whole interpretation of Pss 23: 6, 61: 8, is further confirmed by a final and remarkable parallel, this time from a West Semitic royal document. The king Qf Ugarit concludes a letter to the king of Egypt with these words.

*p.l. ky. n~Iy.⁷⁴ arY l.pn. bc(l.l pn. bcly
w.urk. ym. bcly*

l.pn. amn. w. I. pn.. il. nsrm. dt. tg'rn nps'. ~ mlk. rb. bcly (UT 1018.17-24)

And indeed [I pr]ay for the *lift* of [my] south *in the presence of* Ba~[al] Saphon, my lord;
and for *length of days* for my lord⁷⁵ *in the presence of* Amun and *in the presence of* the gods of Egypt-may these
(gods) *preserve* the life of the Sun,
the Great King, my lord.

This brief passage contains no less than four examples of verbatim correspondence to Psalms 23 and 61: (1-2) the formulaic word-pair "life" /1 "length of days" (as in PS 23: 6b), (3) the use of "in the presence of" with divine names (as in Ps 61: 8a), and (4) the verb *ng'r* (= Hebrew *ns,r*) in the third person plural jussive (as *yns,rhw* in Ps 61: 8b). This, we may recall, is the same verb found in the blessing in the Sefire treaty (Old Aramaic *nsr*), the Hittite treaties (Akkadian *nas,a~ru*), and several Psalms passages related to Ps 61: 8 (i.e., 25: 21; 40: 12). The Ugaritic passage comes at the end of the text and is a prayer for blessing, as is true in the case of Pss 25: 21, 61: 8, the prayers of Assurbanipal cited above, and-in our view-Ps 23: 6. The intention of the prayer may be seen from the expressions *hy. n~/yJ*, *urk. ym*, and *tg'rn nps~* ~ good health (*ky flp~* = Akkadian *ba~ napi~i*)⁷⁶ and long life (*urk ym<m>*). That *hy (np~) /1 urk ym<m>* means long-lasting health is also evident from KAI 26 A III 3-5, where the word-pair occurs with *hym* juxtaposed to "well-being."⁷⁷ The concluding petition that the gods of Egypt "preserve the life" of the Pharaoh is also a request for continued good health. This serves to corroborate our thesis that in Ps 23: 6 (on the level of royal imagery) what the king is really praying for is that Yahweh grant him a long, healthy life.

As the king prays in Ps 23: 6 that he never be excluded from Yahweh's house, so the psalmist prays in the name of the exiles that they never again be excluded from the Promised Land. This prayer is n6 expression of pious sentimentality but is uttered in light of the traumatic experience of exile and deportation. The same thought is expressed in the conclusion to the hortatory section of Deuteronomy (30: 19-20).

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, *blessing and curse*; therefore choose life . . ., loving Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means *lift* to you and *length of days*, that you may *dwell in the land* which *Yahweh* swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

To summarize our discussion of vv 5-6, we have argued that the psalmist here has artfully reworked the language, imagery, and motifs of royal psalmody and theology. The result is that, as in other exilic writings, language once applied to the Davidic king (royal imagery) is now applied to the exilic community (restoration imagery). The two levels of discourse in these verses may be illustrated as follows.

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ROYAL IMAGERY

5 The god ~ahweh) fetes the king with a sumptuous banquet in the sight of his foes; the banquet reaffirms the overlord-vassal relationship between god (Yahweh) and king.

6 The king prays that the (Davidic) covenant blessings preserve (~yn~rw) him always; the king prays that he may always dwell in Yahweh's temple-i.e., that he may never be excluded from the divine presence.

RESTORATION IMAGERY

Yahweh fetes the returning exiles with sumptuous provisions to the envy of the nations; the feast reaffirms Yahweh's provident concern for his covenant people.

The exiles pray that from now on only the covenant blessings pursue (*yrdpw*) them always (not the curses!); the exiles pray that they may always dwell in Yahweh's "house" -i.e., that they may never again be excluded from the Promised Land.

IV. Conclusion

In the conclusion to his study of Psalm 23, Freedman makes the following observation.

The language of the Psalm . . . bears marked resemblances to the distinctive vocabulary and ideas of the exilic period, with special interest in a new Exodus, a new march through the wilderness, and a new settlement in the promised land. In addition, the wilderness experience has been idealized with respect to past history, and projected into the future, e.g., the "waters of contention" have become the "waters of repose" (1980: 301).

It is the contention of this paper that Ps 23: 6 adds to the above series of motifs the notion of covenant, so that the complete sequence in Psalm 23 is new exodus, new march through the wilderness, *new covenant* (i.e., renewal of the Sinai covenant combined with the blessings of the Davidic covenant), and new settlement in the Promised Land. Like the other motifs, the new covenant was also promised by a prophet of the seventh-sixth centuries; like the wilderness experience, the new covenant is an idealization of the old, projected into the future.

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant, and I had to show myself their master, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God and they will be my people (Jer 31: 31-34).⁷⁸

And how was this new covenant in Jeremiah an idealization of the old Sinai covenant? In the words of B. W.

Anderson:

Jeremiah's final understanding of the covenant relationship . . . exhibits a polarity: on the human side the covenant was broken and . . . could not be repaired by covenant ceremonies; on the divine side, however, the relationship was grounded in Yahweh's *'ahJbat co7a-m*, his everlasting love which is not

~ ~itu~i~?a'i-T. C~rt~ng ~I~pOiatity, it is~ not surprising

that the prophet's theology begins to move away from the Mosaic covenant toward the Davidic covenant with its unconditional promises of grace (1976: 353).

Commenting on the unprecedented notion of a new covenant written on the hearts of the people, W. L. Holladay writes:

The old contract is a dead letter; it is in the wastebasket, so God is going to draw up a new one which is different from the old one in crucial respects. God will draw up a new sort of contract for a new sort of relationship altogether, so that all the old difficulties will be gone and forgotten (1974: 119-20).

Because the notion is so unprecedented and so radically new, Holladay concludes, "But Jeremiah's vision of a new covenant is laid aside, never to be touched again in the Old Testament" (1974: 120). If the analysis of Ps 23: 6 in this paper has merit, perhaps the author of the psalm represents a single exception to Holladay's statement, an author who like Jeremiah looked to a new and eternal covenant, and celebrated it in his poem.

Notes

1. Note the similarity in structure common to

Ps 23: 4

Ps 138: 7

Ps 27: 3

gm ky 'lk byg' s, lmu't /l l' 'yr' r'

'm 'lk bqr b srh ll thyny 'm 'h, nh 'ly mbnh ll' yyr' Ihy

In this connection note several further links between Psalms 27 and 23. Psalm 27

Psalm 23

I *yhwh 'wry* 4 *!bty bbyl yhwh*
y my hyy

6 *w'th yrwm r's'y 'l yby sbybwt y*

ll *wnhny b 'rh mys'wr lm'n ~*

I *yhwh r'y*

6 *ws'bty bbyl yhwh*
(= v6a~

5 *t'rk l'pny slhn*
ngd sr ry

3 *ybnny bm'g'y sdq*
lm'n s'mk

2. In place of the hendiadys of protective rod and staff, it is Yahweh's (left) hand and right hand, another hendiadys, that protects the psalmist in Psalm 138 against the wrathful enemies. The connection between the divine shepherd's implements in Psalm 23 and the divine hands that wield them in Psalm 138 should be noted.

3. Other scholars (e.g., Merrill 1965) have been unsatisfied with an analysis of the poem as composed of two conflicting images but have not been able to demonstrate convincingly its unity. In the most recent extensive study of the psalm (Mittmann ~80), the author argues that, once the *Ga"ung* of Psalms 23 is correctly identified as *Danklied*, the second image of Yahweh as

host is seen to be not an image at all, but an institutional reality: the sacrifice and meal of the t5da ritual, at the conclusion of which the *Danklied* is sung. For a similar understanding of the psalm, see Vogt 1953.

4. Freedman (1980: 298-99) proposes several solutions for the analysis of *wibty* in Ps 23: 6, of which the most compelling would seem to be deriving the form from *lwb* II, a byform of *yib* (cf. *twb* and *yib*); so also Andersen 1970: 273. In the commentary on Hosea co-authored by Andersen and Freedman (1980), two other possible instances of *lwb* II have been identified: in Hos 11: 11 (p.592) and 12: 10 (p. 618). For further evidence that *wibty* here is derived from this root, see below, n. 73.

5. Note the appearance of *u'rwkh htwbh* in an Exodus context in Neh 9: 20.

6. Psalm 23 shares with Psalm 31 the pair *nh;h/I nhl*. For *s,dqMmy~wr*; cf. Isa 11: 4; Prov 1: 3; 2: 9. Note also Ps 27: 11: *brrny yhu~h drkk II tvnh,ny b~b mys'wr lmCn !w~;* Ps 5: 9: *yhwh nh,ny bs,dqtk lm'n 5'wr'y II hwsr /pny drkk*; Ps 67: 5: *ky tipt, 'mym mys'ur II wl'mym h'rs, tnh,m*.

7. P55 31: 5 and 143: 10 are both part of a formulaic system that includes P55 71: 5; 91: 9; 43: 2; 25: 5 as well. See Culley 1967: 52 #34.

8. Dahood 1970: 324: "With 1 IQPsa and many manuscripts we read *h'rs*, for *ke'ere~*."

9. For this translation, see below, p.112.

10. For this understanding of Psalm 7, see Tigay 1970: 178-86. We read *kebedi* for MT *ke~o~£*, with Dahood (1966: 43), and understand */rs, //I'pr* as references to the underworld. Note also his comment (1970: 323): "Where our poet [in Ps 143: 3] uses the verb *h5~bani*; 'He made me dwell,' Ps vii uses *ya'ike*, 'Let him cause [my liver] to dwell' (vs. 6) in a very similar context." For the synonymy of *bw,ybny* and *yskn*, cf. *ysb/Iskninjudg* 5: 17; Isa 13: 20; 32: 16; Ps 69: 36-37, and the collocations in Isa 32: 18; Ps 68: 17

11. Psalm 69 is another lament that, like Psalm 143, shares a number of motifs with Psalm 23. Like Psalm 143, Psalm 69 presents in the lament section a series of negative or contrasting images.

Ps 69: 20

Ps 69: 23

Ps 69: 25

Ps 69: 29

ngdkkls,w,y (cf. 23: 5: *ngds,ny*)

yhy Slh,n /pnyhm (cf. 23: 5: *t'rk lpny slb~*)

wbrwn 'pk ys'ygm (cf. 23: 6: *'k twb wbsd yrdpwny*; on the synonymy of *rdp II hs'yg*, see below, p. 103, and nn. 14, 26, 38; and note *rdpw* in v 27)

wmhw, mspr h,yyim (cf. 23: 6: *w~ty bbyt yhwh II ki ymy byy*).

And in the thanksgiving section of the psalm (vv 31-37) there is a positive parallel to Ps 23: 6.

Ps 69: 36-37 *uy~bw~m* [i.e., in Zion and the cities of Judah, v 36] *wyr~wh tvzr' 'bdywynh,Iwh w'hby Imtv y~nw bh*.

12. For the analysis of MT *wznh*, *m~lwm* as verb + enclitic *mem* with *I/win* as direct object, see Hummel 1957: 105; adopted by Hillers (1972: 55).

13. Note in this connection Lam 1: 3, where the verbs *rdp* and *hlyg* appear: *gith yhwth in 'fly winrb 'bdh II hy' ysbh bguyin I' ins,'h in,'u'b II ki rdp'yh h'lygwh byn hms,ryin*, "Judah has gone into exile after suffering and after much toil. She dwelt among the nations but found no rest. All who pursued her cornered her in narrow straits" (translation from Hillers 1972: 1). This text exhibits the same kind of reversal of Psalm 23 as does Lamentations 3: Judah in exile is denied rest and is overtaken by hostile pursuers.

14. For *rdp II hlmyd* cf. 2 Sam 22: 38; and note the variant in Ps 18: 38: *rdp II hs'yg*. Geller (1979: 66) writes: "The variant *'linyidin* has been chosen over *'lygin* of Ps. 18. Since *hsyg* is common after *rdp*, *'linyidin* may be *lectio difficilior*." All three forms occur in Deut 28: 45 (*wrdpwk II whs'ygwk 'd hlindk*). We will have occasion to return to *rdp* + *hlyg* later in this paper; see below, n. 26.

15. Andersen and Freedman (1980: 481) suggest a different translation for v 3: "The Good One [i.e., Yahweh] rejects Israel. As an enemy he will pursue him." However, they recognize the possibility of the translation proposed here, given the syntactic ambiguity of the line (p.491). Another possibility would be to understand *yrdpw* as precative ("May an enemy pursue him"), as we shall suggest *yrdpwny* and *wibty* are to be understood in Ps 23: 6. Finally, note that Emerson (1975: 704) identifies *'wyb yrdpw* as a covenant curse.

16. On *yd'* as covenant terminology, see Huffmon 1966: 31-37; see Freedman 1972: 536 on the structure of Hos 8: 3. On *t,wb* in Hos 8: 3 as a synonym for *byty*, see Fox 1972: 42. Johag (1977) is a good review of the evidence from the OT and the ancient Near East. In this connection, the pair *I/win II t,wb* in Lam 3: 17 is interesting, given the appearance of these words as treaty terminology. See Moran 1963; Hillers 1964a (although this pair passes without comment in his work on Lamentations); Croatto 1968; Weinfeld 1973.

17. By analogy with Deut 28: 45, where the subject of *rdpwk* is *hqlwt* ("All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you"), and with a number of the extra-biblical parallels to be adduced below, we are tempted to understand the verb *trdp*

as third person feminine singular, with *t'lik* as subject ("May it [the curse] pursue them in anger~") rather than second person masculine singular ("May you pursue.
."). However, in defense of the second person understanding of RSV, NEB, NAB, JB, AB, and TEY,

note Lam 3: 43' where *wtrdpnw* must mean "and you ~ahweh1 have pursued us." It may also be worth recording a reversal of Psalm 23 in this same chapter of Deuteronomy: compare *Cl my mbtvt ynhlly np~ y~wbb* (Ps 23: 2-3) with *wi' ybwh innwh ... wntn yiw h 1k Im ... w~bwn np~* (Deut 28: 65).

18. So also Eaton 1976: 153: "A tendency to personify the covenant-graces appears fairly clearly in a number of passages; they take the form of angelic beings commissioned by God to accompany and guard his king." In addition to Ps 23: 6, Eaton cites P55 21: 4; 40: 12; 42: 9; 43: 3; 54: 7; 59: 11; 61: 8; 91: 4. On P55 40: 12 and 61: 8, see below.

19. Tromp's observation is apposite: "In Accadian incantations persecution is one of the favorite occupations of the demons. The Angel of Yahweh has a similar task in Ps 35: 5.'" (1969: 204).

20. For *bytyhwh* as "Yahweh's domain, i.e., the land of Yahweh," see Freedman' 1980: 300, where he refers to *byt yhwh* in Hos 8: 1 and 9: 3-4, where ~s, *yhwh* is parallel to *byt yhwh* (see also Andersen and Freedman 1980: 520). Andersen (1970: 273) translates Ps 23: 6 "And I shall reside on Yahweh's estate for the duration of my lifespan." Cf. *by'* = land of~Yahweh in Hos 9: 15; Zech 9: 8. In Jet 12: 7 *byt II nhllh* occurs in a context that may be covenantal (cf. *t,wb* in 12: 6). See also Johnson 1970 and Clements 1965: 73-75. For parallels to *klyiny* *h,yy* and dwelling in the land *l'rkynyin*, note Deut 4: 40 (*wlm'n t)tyk yinyim '1 h'dmh '5- yhwh 'Ihyk ntn 1k kl hyinyin*), 5: 30 (*lm'n thywn wtwb 1km wh'rktm ymy b'rs '5- tyr'wn*), and 30: 20 (*ky hu' hyyk w'rk yinyk 1'bt '1 h'dmh ~5- n~' yhwh ... itt Ihin*); cf. also Deut 5: 16; 6: 2; 11: 9; and Tawil ~74; Weinfeld 1972: 308-9.

21. See Weinfeld 1973: 192 n. 35: "Ps. 25: 7 speaks about rememben'ng of *twb* and *hswd* which are none other than the ancient gracious covenant, see v.6. Compare Ps. 23: 6...."

22. In addition to Psalm 7 and Hosea 8, two other passages where *rdp* appears in a covenantal context might be noted. First, in Amos 1: 1 lb: *ej rdpw bh,rb 'hyw wTh,t rhinyw*, "Because he pursued his brothers with the sword and utterly destroyed his allies." Fishbane (1970 and 1972) argues that the pair *'byw II rbinyw* is synonymous, meaning "covenant partner." As a parallel to *rdp II sb'*, note *rdp + h!myd* in Deut 28: 45; Lam 3: 66 and *rdp II h~myd* in 2 Sam 22: 38 (= Ps 18: 38). The second passage is PS 83: 16: *kn trdpm bsCrk wbswptk tthlin*, "(0 my God-v 1~ pursue them with your tempest and rout them with your storm." Rober~ (1976: 130) has described Psalm 83 as "a prayer for help against rebellious vassals"; since covenant was the ordinary instrument for linking overlord to vassal, here too, as in Amos 1: 11, the punishment for violation of covenant is described by the verb *rdp*.

23. Freedman 1980: 297-98. To Freedman's list should be added Prov 15: 9(*mrpdsdqh*). Note also *s,dqh* as subject of *hiyg*, a synonym of *rdp*, in isa 59: 9.

24. Mittmann (1980: 16) states the issue accurately: "Das Weg- und Wandermotiv der ersten Strophe nimmt die zweite andeutend wieder auf im Ausdruck *rdp* 'verfolgen,' der hier zuna"chst befremdet, weil er sonst in der Regel im Sinne der feindlichen Nachstellung gebraucht ist und mit *tjb* und *hesed* nicht recht zu harmonieren." He goes on to claim that the tension between the verb *rdp* and its subject *twb wh,sd* is intended: *rdp* "lisst den dunkeln Hintergrund der Bildvorstellung von V. 4a noch einmal an- und mitklingen: nicht Unheil verfolgt den Gerechten, selbst wenn der Weg durch das Tal der Finsternis führt, sondern Heil und Hilfe" (pp. 16-17) As we hope to show, Mittmann is correct about this intended tension.

25. For a general treatment of Deuteronomy 28, see Hillers 1964b: 30-42.

26. For *rdp+hlygin* prose, see Gen 31: 23,25;44: 4;Exod 14: 9;Deut~: 6;28: 45;Josh 2: 5; 1 Sam 30: 8; 2 Kgs 25: 5 (= Jet ~9: 5 = 52:8). For examples in poetry, see Exod 15: 9; Hos 2: 9; Ps 18: 38; Lam 1: 3.

27. The close association, if not exact synonymy, of *rdp* and *hfyg* allows one to recognize the striking parallel to Ps 23: 6 in Zech 1: 6: *'k dbty wbqy ... hiw' hiygw 'btykm*. On this text, see below, pp. 108-9.

28. As Freedman himself notes, "the key term *midbar* 'wilderness' is omitted, or not used" here (1980: 296).

29. Among those who have argued for the royal character of this psalm are Merrill 1965 and van Zyl 1963.

30. Note that Hebrew *rwh* (as in Ps 23: 5) likewise means "drench" in the *Pi'el* and *Htp* 'ii. Cf. Jet 31: 12, which says that the "soul" of the exiles shall be "like a watered (*rwh*~ garden"; and v 14, where Yahweh promises, "I will drench (*wruy*~ the soul(s) of the priests with d'n" (cf. *d'nt* in Ps 23: 6).

31. For the continuation of this text, see below p. 112.

32. That the scene described here is in fact a "vassal oath renewal" has been argued most recently by Sheriffs (1979: 56). See also Cogan (1974: 49), who describes this scene as "suggestive of *adu*~ oath

ceremonies."

33. For an alternative proposal for *ngd s,rry*, see the Appended Note.

34. For this translation, and a treatment of the relation of this cuneiform passage to the two texts mentioned, see Barre' 1982.

35. *hsdy duy*d. For evidence that "David" here should be understood as an objective genitive; see Williamson 1978.

36. On the relationship between Psalm 89 and Isa 55: 1-5, see Eissfeldt 1962.

37. This motif of superabundant provisioning is also present in Ps 78: 15-16, 25-29.

37a. For this text and translation, see CAD D 65b. Note, however, that the same form of this verb (Gtn form of *redu*) occurs regularly in a hostile sense, where the appropriate translation would be "pursue" (see AHW 966b). But in the Akkadian passage under discussion the meaning is clearly positive; it should be kept in mind that *redu* occurs far more frequently with a positive connotation than does Hebrew *rdp* (see AHW 965-66).

38. Ps 40: 12 is a significant parallel to Ps23: 6 because in the following verse (13) we read *hiygwny 'unty*; *hiyg*, a frequent parallel to *rdp*, has here a first person singular suffix, as does *rdp* in Ps 23: 6. Because his iniquities have *overtaken* the author of Psalm 40, he prays that Yahweh's *hsd* and *'int* protect him, a sentiment similar to that in Ps 23: 6 and expressed in similar language.

39. See Fitzgerald 1972: 90, 92.

40. That this is also the case with *yrdpwny* in Ps 23: 6 will be demonstrated below (see p.¹¹²).

41. The latest attempt to solve this problem is that of Dahood (1979: 419). He translates Ps 61: 8b, "May the kindness and fidelity of Destiny freading inenJor MT *man*) safeguard him." However, we accept the traditional parsing of *inn* in this verse as an apocopated *Pi'el* imperative from *innh*, with the meaning here perhaps "bid, command" (see HALAT 567a). Some support for this interpretation may be found in an inscription of Sennacherib. Like the Esarhaddon text cited earlier, this inscription recounts a banquet given at the dedication of a royal palace.

i-na tal-ri-it E GAL *sa' ba-bu-ta-te* KUR-ia *u'-sa-a'-qa-a inu-ha-'i-in* GESTIN. MES
du-u'-!6-pu
 <sur>-*ra-'i-in ain-kir i-na qi-bit* AN.SAR *a-bu* DINGIR.MES *u' dl-tar Sar-ra-ti* dALAD ~*uin-qi*
 dLAMMA *duin-qi q6-reb* E.GAL *'a-a-tu da-ri' li'-tab-ru-6 a-a :~par-ku-u' i-da-a-'a*

(Luckenbill 1924: 125.51-53)

At the dedication of the palace I poured wine on the heads of the people of my land;
 I drenched their bowels with mead. *By the command* of Assur, father of the gods, and Istar, the queen,
 may a good tutelary god and a good protecting god remain forever in that palace-may they never withdraw from its
 side.

Like Ps 23: 5-6, this prayer describes a royal banquet followed by a prayer to be protected by a beneficent *redu* and *lamassu* (who, like *twb wh,sd*, often occur in literature as a *pair* of deities) *at the command* of the supreme deities, Assur and Istar. Similarly-if our understanding of *mn* is correct-Yahweh is asked to *command* the twin covenant blessings *twb wksd* to accompany the king (see also Eaton 1976: 153).

42. So NAB; similarly RSV, JB, TEV, Kraus 1972: 432, Dahood 1968: 83.

43. SoNEB.

44. We would not expect *'pny yhwh* in Psalm 61 in any case, since this is part of the Elohist psalter. See Kraus 1972: 432 and his note.

45. SeevanderWoude 1976: 2.458. Some of the examples he cites are Josh 18:6; Judg 20: 23,26; 1 Sam 1: 12; 11: 15; 15: 33; 2 Sam 7; 18; 2 Kgs 19: 14.

46. Other, more distant connections with Psalm 23 are *tnh,ny* (Ps 61: 3; cf. *ynh,ny* in Ps 23: 3); *inpnny* ~ (Ps 61: 4; cf. *ngdsrry* in Ps 23: 5).

47. The term *dbry* here is best taken as referring to the commandments of Yahweh in the covenant rather than his prophetic "predictive" words. Note the close connection with *hgy* and the use of *db~(yin)* elsewhere, especially in Deuteronomy, to denote the commandments (see Schmidt 1978: 116-18). An interesting parallel to the notion of Yahweh's words or commandments "overtaking" those who disregard them is found in an inscription of Esarhaddon, where a penitent vassal declares to the king:

mainft ilani rahu~ Sa e'iqu amat larratika Ia an'lu ikiudanni yati, "The 6ath of the great gods, which I transgressed, and your royal word/command, which I disregarded, have ov~~aken me" (Borger 1967:

§68.23).

48. The word 'k in this verse is often indifferently translated either "surely" (RSV) or "only" (NAB). In the present context the latter interpretation is to be preferred.

49. We should p?obably understand *t,wb wh,sd* as having the force of "your goodness and kindness," i.e., "your covenant blessings," given the second person cast Qf the poem from v 4 on: 'th, Shtk, wmf'ntk, t'rk, d'nt (so L. Alonso Schbkel 1981: 109, 116, who translates "Tu bondad y.Jealdad me siguen"). Note that the LXX renders *wh,sd* as *kai to eteos sou*. One might even argue that the suffixes of *sht,k wmf'ntk* are double-duty, serving to quali~ twb *wbsd*, the only other hendiadys in the poem. For the association of *sbt,k win'ntb* with *t,wh wksd* on structural grounds, see Milne 1974-75: 238-39, 243-44. The possibility of a connection between them is reinforced when one recognizes a wordplay based on sequence of consonants: in *sbt,k* the consonant sequence *b-t,-k* is echoed chiastically in the sequence *k-t,-b* of ~k *t,wb*. This is only one instance of assonance and wordplay in Psalm 23. Others include *ry* and *r'*, where the similarity in sound is in counterpoint to the opposition in meaning ("my shepherd" vs. "evil"); the consonant sequence *n-h* in *mnhwt, ynh,ny*, and (reversed) *5'h,n*; *s-b* in *ylwbb, Sbt,k, wibty* (and the similar p-S in *nply*); *r-k* in *t'rk* and *l'rk*; *in- 'n-S* of *lin'n 5mw* and *in-S- 'n* of *ml'ntk*; the consonants *b-m-g-l-s*, of *bm'gly s,dq* in v 3a repeated in *bgy~ ~mwt* (where again similarity of sound contrasts with opposition in meaning); and the syllable *ma 'g-* echoed in *gain* of the next line.

50. In Hittite the word is *parhiSkandu*, from the iterative stem of *par~*, "to chase, pursue" (= Hebrew *rdp*): F3 §§10.25; 15.25; 17.21; 18.30; 19.8; 20.15; 22.33; 28.5; F5 §§9.57; 13.2; 16.30; 17.56, 60. In Akkadian copies of Hittite treaties one finds *likahid-* from *kaSa~du* (D), "to chase, pursue WI rev 69; W2 rev 34. (In Mesopotamian documents *kasada* [-, "overtake" [= Hebrew *hfyg*, as in Zech 1: ~, also appears in treaty contexts: cf. Borger 1967: §68.23; *ABL* 350 rev 4-5; 584 rev 4; CAD E 390a; K 278b.) In the curses one also encounters Hittite (*arha*) *harninkanda* from (*arha*) *harnink-*, "to destroy": F4 §§ 19.9; F5 §21.37; F6 §§ 10.10; 14.31; 19.69; 24.7; 26.2; 40.33; 45.57; KBo IV 10 rev 7, 20, 27; KBo VIII 35 rev 35 vs 1118. The Akkadian equivalent is *lihalliqu-* from *halaqu* (D), "to destroy": Fl §20.26; W2 rev 53; ~W3 rev IV 52; W4 rev 16. Note that the Hebrew equivalents, 'bd and (*h*)*Sm(y)d*, also occur in the context of covenant curses (Deut 28: 20, 22 [with *rd~*, 24, 45 [with *rdpl*, 48, 51, 61, 63).

51. In Hittite the word *ispabsandara frompabS-*, "to preserve, protect"(= Hebrew *ns,r*): F4 §20.45; F5 §21.44; F6 §11.12; KBo IV 10 rev 10; KBo VIII 35 vs 1115.

52. Fl §21.32; WI rev 72; W2 rev 36, 55; W4 rev 20.

53. But in Psalm 25 *tin wyIr* do not constitute a covenantal hendiadys like *t,wb whsd/or hsd w'int*. Perhaps the use of *wyIr* with *ns,r* is patterned on the use of the covenantal expressions with this verb, a likelihood in view of the high degree of covenantal language in Psalm 25.

Ps 25: 4 *drkyk yhw hwdy 'ny* (cf. Ps 23: 4: *ynbny bm'gly s,~*)

Ps 25: 5 *ky 'th Thy yS-y* (cf. Ps 23: 4: *ky 'th 'indy*)

Ps 25: 6 *rbinyk//bsdyk*

Ps 25: 7 *kbsdkl/lm 'n t,wbk*

(cf. Ps 23: 6: *t,wb wh,sd*)

Ps 25: 10 *kl 'rbwt yhw h,sd w'int*

Ps 25: 21 *tin wy5-*

54. Sefire IC 15-16 (= KAI 222 C 15-16): *ys,rw 'lhn mnywinh winn byth* (see Fitzmyer 1967: 20). Fitzmyer translates, "May (the) gods keep [all evil~ away from his day and his house" (p.21). But in the blessings section of the Hittite treaties-and this treaty shows a number of affinities to the Hittite treaty form-the object of *pah~Sandaru/hs,s,uru~* is always the vassal and his wife, household, possessions, etc. (see the texts cited in nn. 51-52). The translation by Gibson (1975: 33) may be helpful: "May the gods keep (him) all his days and his house as long as it lasts." On this tendering of *ofmnywinh*, see Gibson 1975: 43; cf. *myinyk* in I Sam 25: 28.

55. See below, pp.112-13.

56. "Life" II "length of days" is one of the most widely distributed paratactic word-pairs in Semitic literature. It occurs in Hebrew (Deut 30: 20; Ps 21: 5; Prov 3: 2), Ugaritic (UT 1018.18-21), Phoenician (KAI 26 A III 3-5), and Akkadian (*bal~*, u II *ardk uin~* see CAD A'2 223-24).

57. Note the correspondence of this passage to Ps 61: 7-8:

2 Kgs 20

Psalm 61

6 *whspty Cl ymyk h'ins qrh Snh* And I will add fifteen years to your days.

5 *bywm hSlySy tClh byt yhw* On the thi'd day you will go up to the temple of Yahweh.

7 *ymyin Cl ymy inik twsyp Snwtyw kmw dr wdr Add* (more) days to the days of the king; Let his years be like eternity!

8 *ySh 'tvlin l'pny ~lhyin*

Let him dwell fQrever

in the presence of God.

For the connection between the "third day" and recovery from sickness, cf. Hos 6: 2 (see Barre' 1978: 139-40).

58. This is the same word found in Deut 28: 27 in the Hebrew version of the treaty-curse associated with the Moon god Sin; see Weinfeld 1972: 117-18 and n. 6. Moreover, in 4QPr Nab 2, the Aramaic cognate *Sbn'* describes the affliction of Nabonidus, which was also apparently connected with the curse of Sin; see Weinfeld 1972: 121 n. 2.

59. *MTiythbpSw*(= Kethib; Qere = *bythbpSy*tas in 2 Kgs 15: 5). On this disputed term see Myers 1974: 151.

60. *Sin ... sahar'uppa . lilabbiSma adi u~ini SimatiSu ay ibib* (BBS §7 1116-17).

61. *adi um battu bisu lizainmima* (CAD Z 156b).

62. *ina kamat aii'u liSib* (BBS § 11111 5).

63. Note that the Targum on this verse has *hr inyrwSIm*, "outside of Jerusalem," not found in the MT See Le Deaut and Robert 1971: 2.140.

64. For this translation of *lihulliq* in this curse, see Postgate 1969: 74.

65. Istar, the daughter of Sin, is invoked as follows in a Neo-Assyrian curse: *IStar . . . sabarsuppa limallili ana ekurri ekalli erebSu tiballiq*, "May I~tar . . . fill him with leprosy; may she cut off his access to temple and palace" (Postgate 1969: §37. 14'-16'). The curse of Sin reads similarly: *Sin ... (saba4suppu'*

lupal(hPJs'u(nuj mazzassaSunu issu ekurri ekalli tuballiq, "May Sin ... clothe them ... with leprosy; may he cut off their standing from temple and palace" (BRM 4.50: 16-18; see AHW 638a). Note also VTE 419-20: *Sin ... sabarsuppe" liballipkunu ina mahar ila~ni u Sarri erabkunu ~libal'iq*, "May Sin

clothe you with leprosy; may he cut off your entering into the presence of the gods or the king." Instead of *hbalh*q. Wiseman's text (1958: 59) reads *ay iqbi*, "May he forbid [lit., not command)" But all of the fragments containing this line (27, 28B, 29, 35, 56) break off before the verb; *ay iqbi* is evidently Wiseman's conjectural restoration. Given the texts cited in this note, perhaps the restoration *lulli~alliq* should be preferred.

66. For texts containing *erebu/era~bu* and *mazzassu*, see the previous note. For *italluka*, note the curse found in Neo-Assyrian royal grants with the king as subject, but clearly patterned on the Sin curse: *qereb ekurri ekalli italluka liaamine'SuJ*, "May he forbid him to walk in temple or palace" (Postgate 1969: §§9.62; 10.62; 12.62).

67. VTE 420. For the text, see n. 65.

68. The verb here (*italluka*) is in the Gtn-stem, which has an iterative or "habitative" nuance; see GAG §91e.

69. In one royal prayer the king prays, *mabarka nainriSatall(uk)a luSbi*, "May I find fulfillment ever walking radiantly in your presence" (Ebeling 1953: 64.22). On the royal character of this prayer, see Seux 1976: 291 n. 1.

70. The text reads: *nan ke' lingaiS appanf4(u)J nu apella tuzzin dasuwa(bbanduj*; see Oettinger 1976: 6.24.

71. VTE 423-24. Reading with Borger (1961: 187): *niti enjkunu liSSima ina ek/eti itallaka*.

72. KAI 4.3-6 (note *y*)rk ...*ymt.ybmtk* [lines 3-51, "May [the gods of Byblo~ lengthen the days of Yehimilk . . .); 5.2 (restored); 6.2-3 (note *t'rk* ... *fyint*.)*lbCl* [lines 2~, "May [the Lady of Byblos) lengthen [the days of 'E)liba'al . . .); 7.4-5; 10.8-11 (strictly speaking, this votive inscription ends with line 11; what follows is a curse directed against those who would tamper with the objects described in the inscription proper); 12.4;~18.8; 25.5-7 (note *~rk by* [line ~, "length ofhfe"); 26 A III 2-11 = C III 1~IV 12 (here, as in KM 10, ~he blessing ends the royal inscription proper; it is followed by a curse

against whoever does harm to the inscription); 38.2; 39.3; 215.22-23; 217.7-9.

73~ The fact that ySb in Ps 61: 8 (Ps 23: 6b) is unquestionably from the root ySb < ~wSb settles the question of whether *Shty* in P55 27: 4; 23: 6 is from *Swb* (I), "return," or from a by-form of ySb. Cf. the parallel Esarhaddon text: *qerebSa da-riS lurmima*, "May I dwell within it forever."

74. Gordon (1965: 2.19) reads *n~S? a?JrS*; the~ transliteration in *PRU li 34* has *np(S. . . a(?J)rS*. But there is room on the copy (see *PRU 1134*) for *y* and the word-divider following *n~51*. Since the king of Ugarit wishes Pharaoh long life in the presence of his [i.e., Pharaoh's] gods, the corresponding wish for *hy npS* in the presence of the Ugaritic god must refer to the king

of Ugarit. Thus one should restore *by. n~Sy. airS*.

75. Literally, "and for the length of the days of my lord."

76. Even by itself *ba~,u* can mean "good health" (see CAD B 46); when followed by *napisti* it always has this specific nuance (see CAD A12 223-24; 47-49).

77. Similarly Akkadian *balat,u* is often paired with *S~mu/Salamu*; see CAD B 46-50.

78. It is worth noting that in Jeremiah 31, along with the prophet's announcement of a new covenant, we find these parallels to Psalm 23: *wlykm 'I nh,ly mym bdrk ySr* (v 9); *wSmrw kr~ Cdrw* (v 10); *nhrw 'I t,wb ybwh* (v 12); *wewyty nps khnyin a'n* (v 14).

Appended Note

In the text of this paper we have presented evidence from the OT and extra-biblical sources that would seem to shed light on the meaning of *ngds,rry* in the context of Psalm 23. Notwithstanding its plausibility, "in the sight of my foes" strikes one as somehow out of place in a banquet scene. We therefore propose for consideration an alternative interpretation of this phrase.

One striking parallel to Ps 23: 5-6 adduced above is Esarhaddon's inscription describing the dedication of his new palace in Calah, in which he describes a royal banquet, prays for blessings for himself, and expresses the hope of dwelling forever in his palace. As regards the royal banquet itself, this text mentions the following details: seating the guests at a festive table, causing their hearts to rejoice, drenching their "bowels" with wine, and anointing their heads with oil. Only the first and last of these seem to be echoed in Psalm 23 (vv Saa, Sba), although "I drenched their bowels with wine" is similar to "My cup runs over."

But does the parallel extend further? One term that invites closer inspection is *surraSun*, "their bowels." It is also found in other royal documents describing royal banquets. Given the similarities already noted between Esarhaddon's inscription and Ps 23: 5-6, one is tempted to ask: Could there be a connection between *surraSun* and *sr*? Dahood has noted a number of passages in the Psalter where Hebrew *s,r* appears to be equivalent to Akkadian *s,urru* (1966: 38 [Ps 6: 8], 63 [Ps 10: 5], 189 [Ps 31: 11]; 1968: 161 [Ps 69: 20]).

Understanding *s,r~y* as my heart" (lit., "my bowels, innards") rather than "my foes" necessitates a reconsideration of *ngd*. The problem could be solved by reading *~ngr* for *ngd*, presuming an early scribal confusion of *dakth* and *resh*. If **ngr* is the correct reading, it would be easy to explain why this relatively rare verb (~ X in the MT) would have been read by a copyist as *ngd*. This has actually happened in PS 77: 3, where for MT *ngrh* (*nigger a*) the LXX has *enantion autou* (= *negdo'*) and the Syriac *ngdtny*. We would parse *~ngr* here as a *Nip 'al* infinitive absolute (*nigg5r*); the verb is not attested in the *Qal*. On this reading Ps 23: 5 could be translated as follows.

You spread a table before me,
my heart overflows;
You anoint my head with oil,
my cup runs over.

**flgr* could be similar in meaning to *ainkir(a)* in the Assyrian royal inscriptions ("I drenched"); *makaru* properly means "flood, irrigate" (CAD MII 125a).² The Hebrew verb is found in only one other passage with a part of the body as subject: in Lam 3: 49 it occurs with *~yny* (*yny ngrh wi' tdinh* ... "My eye will stream without stopping"). Lamentations 3, it will be remembered, is the chapter containing a

number of "reversals" of the imagery in Psalm 23. Could *'yny ngrh* be a reversal of Ps 23: 5a~? It may be significant in this connection to note that *~yny* and *S?~* are parallel in Ps 6: 8 (Dahood 1966: 38).

The proposed **ngr S?,*), would seem to fit the banquet context better than *ngd Sr"*. It would also produce a number of interesting stylistic patterns. The first would involve the syntax of v 5.

Saa	verb + prepositional phrase + object
5a~	verb + subject
Sba	verb + prepositional phrase + object
5b~	subject + verb. ³

The syntax of each bicolon is thus identical, except for the reversal of subject and verb in 5b~. Note also

Saa	SUBJECT: Yahweh (second person)
5a~	SUBJECT: my heart (third person + first person suffix)
5b~	SUBJECT: Yahweh (second person)
5b~	SUBJECT: my cup (third pers6n + first person suffix)

If we consider the nouns in v 5 which are not preceded by prepositions, the following pattern emerges.

5a~	
5a~	
Sba	
5b~	
NOUN:	something associated with a banquet (<i>Slh,n</i>)
NOUN:	a part of the body (Qr")
NOUN:	a part of the body (<i>r'Sy</i>)
NOUN:	something associated with a banquet (<i>kwsy</i>).

Here two sets of parallel terms, *Slbn II kwsy'* and *S?, II r* are arranged chiasmatically.

The suggested emendation also produces a sonant pattern (~, -ay) in v Sa: ta *'a~ok lepanay 'u/han II niggor S or er a*). There is also a triple *r* pattern in *n,iggo~r s, or era~y*. Compare the -0,-i pattern and the triple *S* sound in v Sb: *disanta baSSemen ro 'Si II k~£ ra~wa)a'*.

Notes

1. See Luckenbill 1924: 116.75-76: *surraSin* (variant: *surrasun*) *ainkir*; 125.52: *surraSin ainkir*.
2. Actually *ngr* would seem to fit better with *kwsy* and *rwh* with *Sr*". The phrase *kwsy ngrh* would mean "My cup is spilling over, pouring over." Note Ps 75:9, where the two terms occur together: *ky kws bydyhwh... wygr inzh ...*, "For (there is) a cup in Yahweh's hand ... and he will pour from it,..." And *rwh Sr"* would mean, "My heart [lit., bowel~ is drenched." Compare *ainkira surraSun* in the Esarhaddon inscription, "I drenched their bowels (with wine)." Could the psalmist have switched the terms for poetic effect? This appears to be the case in, for example, Ps 1: 1: *'Sry h'ys '5- I' hlk b's,t rS'yin wdrk h.t.'yin I' 'ma' . . .*, "Happy the man who does not walk in the council of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners One would expect *hlk* with *drk* (cf. 1 Kgs 18: 6; 2 Kgs 1: 18; 16: 3; 21: 22, etc.) and 'ma' with '~ (cf. 'ma' with synonymous *swd* in Jer 23: 18, 22).
3. It is better to parse *rwyh* as a verb rather than as the *hapax legomenon rewda* (noun) with the MT. We would read *r~wa)a~* cf. *h.asa-ya napS'* in Ps 5.7: 2. In this way v Sb would begin and end with a perfect verb: *rwyh*.
4. In *RSP 1379* Dahood claims that *S/h,n* and *kwsy* are in parallelism in Ps 23: 5 and notes the parallelism of Ugaritic *ttbny* and *ks* in *CTA 4* 111.15-16 (in the context of a divine banquet).
5. Note the parallelism of "their hearts/bowels" (*surraSun*) and "their heads" (*inuh,h,aSunu*) in the Esarhaddon inscription cited above (p. 105) and in the Sennacherib inscription cited in n. 41 ~see also Luckenbill 1924: 116.75-76).

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