

Exegetical Treatment of Psalm 16

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Introduction

Psalm 16 displays the epitome of faith. We know that “*Faith is being sure of what you hope for, and certain of what you do not see*” (Heb. 11:1), and this is exactly what the psalmist displays. He speaks of his sure hope of protection from the Lord, as well as his certainty of eternal life. Psalm 16 is a prayer of confident faith.

The psalm is a psalm of David. There are those who would disagree with the Davidic authorship of the psalm, however, the evidence in the title of the psalm as well as the references to David as the author in Acts 2:25-32 and 13:35-37 are certainly more than enough to convince the believer who trusts in the inerrancy of Scripture.

The title of the psalm also distinguishes it as a *miktam*. In the NIV the word is simply a transliteration. There is no definite translation for the word, however the commentators do give their opinions. H.C. Leupold believes the word to mean “A mystery poem,” although he gives no root for this translation. Luther, on the other hand, claims that the word comes from the root מִכְתָּם, meaning “noble, distinguished, or golden.” His rendering therefore is “A golden psalm.” Dr. Brug follows this lead with his rendering, “A choice piece,” or “An inscribed poem.” In any case, the word seems to be a simple, descriptive title, having no other function than to name the psalm.

The references to Psalm 16 in Acts make it clear that this is a Messianic psalm. Therefore, the entire psalm refers first of all to Christ. One possibility which comes to mind is the scene in Gethsemane. The reference to the “cup” in verse five brings to mind the other cup which Jesus prayed to have taken from Him. Since we obviously do not have a complete narration of Jesus’ entire prayer, it might be possible that this psalm, or at least the contents of this psalm, were also part of Jesus’ prayer displaying His confidence in His heavenly Father to preserve Him in any situation. Although the psalm is Messianic, and therefore does refer first of all to Christ, since Christ fulfilled this prophecy of David, the psalm then also becomes a prayer of confidence on the lips of every believer.

Finally, we look briefly at the construction of the psalm. Being a classic example of Hebrew poetry, Psalm 16 divides itself nicely into four strophes. Verses one and two provide a theme for the psalm: “God is my Refuge.” Verses three and four apply the theme to human relationships; verses five through eight apply the theme to present blessedness here on earth; and verses nine through eleven apply the theme to future blessedness in eternity.

Verse One

1 מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד שָׁמְרֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי־חַסְדֵי־בְדָ:

Verse: 1

Vocable

מִכְתָּם

Form & Translation

Nom. Masc. Sing. - A Miktam

לְדָוִד

Prep. + Proper Noun - To/for David

שָׁמְרֵנִי

Qal Impv. 2 Masc. Sing. + 1

Com. Sing. Suffix - Preserve me

Significance/Syntax

Root = שָׁמַר “to exercise great care over,” “to take care of,” “to guard.” Used of cherubim in Gen. 3:24, used by Cain in Gen 4:9. Other uses by David in the Psalms include Psalms 34:20; 86:2; 121:3-4, 7

אֱל	Nom. Masc. Sing. - O God	“The strong One” - God is well able to do what the psalmist asks of Him
כִּי־חָסִיתִי בְךָ	Conj. + Qal Perf. + 1 Com. Suffix - For I take refuge	Root = חָסָה “seek refuge” or “flee for protection.” Literally, from a rainstorm or from any danger in the high hills, usually under a rock or in a cave. Figuratively, to “put trust in, confide in, hope in” God. Leads to referring to God as “Rock” or “Refuge”
בְּךָ	Prep. + 2 Masc. Sing. Suffix, Pausal form - In you	

The psalmist, apparently in some danger, offers a prayer to God for preservation. He does this knowing full well that God is able to grant his request, for this knowledge has already led him to place his full trust in God as his refuge. The perfect form here indicates that the psalmist is absolutely certain that God is his refuge, seeing this as an action which is finished and completed.

In this verse we have the standard of faith for which every Christian strives: perfect confidence in God as our refuge, as the one who is able to preserve in any situation.

Translation

A miktam of David. Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in you.

NIV - A miktam of David. Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.

Verse Two

2 אָמַרְתָּ לַיהוָה אֲדֹנָי אַתָּה טוֹבָתִי בְּלִעָלְיָךְ:

Verse: 2

Vocable	Form & Translation	Significance/Syntax
אָמַרְתָּ	Qal perf. 2 Fern. Sing - You say	Defective form of amarti - “I have said” Supported by the textual variant
לַיהוָה	Prep. + proper Noun - To the Lord	
אֲדֹנָי	Nom. Masc. Pl. + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - My Lord	
אַתָּה	Pers. Pronoun 2 Masc. Sing - You are	
טוֹבָתִי	Nom. Fem. Sing. + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - My good	
בְּלִעָלְיָךְ	Neg. + Prep. + 2 Masc. Sing. Suffix - Not apart from you	Has the sense of “In addition to” or “Beyond.”

Here אָמַרְתָּ is taken to be the defective form of אָמַרְתִּי, “I have said,” rather than supplying the subject, “O my soul.” This rendering is supported by the textual variant. The psalmist expands on his thoughts in verse one. The “God” who is strong enough to preserve him is also the “Lord,” the God of free and faithful grace, the covenant God who remains faithful to His promise to preserve. By means of direct discourse, the psalmist states the reason God is his refuge: he has nothing that is good apart from the Lord.

Again, the application is simple, yet we are constantly striving and never quite reaching the standard. Every Christian strives for that goal of faith which always sees everything good as having come from God and sees nothing outside of God as being worth anything.

Translation

I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord. My good is not apart from you.”

NIV - I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.”

Verse Three

3 לְקְדוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בְּאֶרֶץ הַמָּה וְאֲדִירֵי כָּל־הַפְּצִי־בָם

Verse: 3

Vocable

לְקְדוֹשִׁים

Form & Translation

Prep. + Masc. Plural Adj. From

קְדוֹשׁ - As for the saints

Significance/Syntax

Root = קָדַשׁ - connotes the state of that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred.

The adjective denominates that which is intrinsically sacred or which has been admitted to the sphere of the sacred by divine rite or cultic act. It connotes that which is distinct from the common or profane. (TWOT II, 788)

אֲשֶׁר־בְּאֶרֶץ

Rel. + Prep. + Def. Art. + Nom Fem. Sing. - In the land

הַמָּה

Pers. Pronoun 3 Masc. Plural - They

וְאֲדִירֵי

Conj. + Adj., Masc. Plural Const.

From – אֲדִיר - And the noble ones

Root = אָדַר - “to become glorious” The root connotes that which is superior to something else. Perhaps a North Canaanite loan-word. (TWOT I, 13) Here the adjective is in apposition to לְקְדוֹשִׁים at the beginning of the verse

כָּל־

Nom. Masc. Sing. Constr. -All

הַפְּצִי־

Nom. Masc. Sing. + 1 Com.

Sing. Suffix from הִפֵּץ – My delight

Root = הִפֵּץ “take delight in, be pleased with, desire” - persons can be the object of this delight when they please other persons. In Psalm 1:2, “delight” is in the law of the Lord.

בָּם

Prep. + 3 Masc. Plural Suffix - In them

Here the ל is a ל of reference, beginning a new strophe, or thought. Delitzsch suggests transposing the waw from וְאֲדִירֵי to לְקְדוֹשִׁים thereby making it a dative governed by אֲמַרְתָּ and carrying forward its influence. He suggests this because he claims it makes the grammar of the verse easier to understand and more common to the Hebrew language. Although it may make the grammar more difficult, the transposing of the waw is not substantiated by any textual variant. Therefore it seems preferable to leave the text as it is and cite the psalmist’s poetic license as the reason for the more difficult grammar. In addition, the aforementioned change also forces Delitzsch to attach verse three to verses one and two, thereby making a strange coupling of

verses four and five also necessary. This would seem to disrupt the flow of the strophes as well as the train of thought of the psalmist.

The verse applies the theme of the psalm to relationships between human beings. In effect, it is really a statement of positive fellowship among those who have made the Lord their refuge. In the same way that the psalmist finds all his good in the Lord, so also he finds all his delight in those who are like-minded in this respect.

The verse might well be used as an illustrative verse in the attempt to explain the doctrine of fellowship in a positive manner. Just as we naturally gravitate toward those with whom we share common interests, so also it is a natural thing for Christians to enjoy each other's fellowship and companionship.

Translation

As for the saints who are in the land, they, the noble ones, all my delight is in them.

NIV - *As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.*

Verse Four

4 יִרְבוּ עֲצוֹתָם אַחֵר מִהָרוּ בַלְאִסִּיף נִסְכֵיהֶם מִדָּם וּבַלְאִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹתָם עַל־שִׁפְתָי:

Verse: 4

Vocable

Vocable	Form & Translation	Significance/Syntax
יִרְבוּ	Qal Impf. 3 Masc. Plural - They multiply	Root = רָבָה “be great, many, much, numerous” - Initial occurrence of this word is in Genesis 1:22 - “Multiply”
עֲצוֹתָם	Nom. Fem. Plural from עֲצָבָת + 3 Masc. Plural Suffix - their pains	Root = עָצַב “to suffer pain” - relates to physical pain as well as emotional sorrow. (TWOT II, 687)
אַחֵר	Adj. – Another	This word begins an appositional relative clause to the preceding. The word is a general designation of the broadest kind for everything that is not God, but which man makes his idol beside God and in opposition to God.
מִהָרוּ	Qal Perf. 3 Com. Plural, Pausal form - They obtained in exchange	Root = מָהַר “to purchase a wife” - Construed after the meaning of the derivative mohar (the price or dowry paid by the bridegroom) and so may be construed in the sense of “woo.”
בַּלְאִסִּיף	Neg. + Hiphil Impf. 1 Com. Sing from נָסַף - Not I will pour out	
נִסְכֵיהֶם	Nom. Masc. Plural of נִסָּךְ + 3 Masc. Plural Suffix – Their libations	The word is here used in a broader sense than is customary. Ordinarily it means a libation of wine. It may here be used to designate the pouring out of the blood of a victim at the base of the altar in a regular sacrifice and so could refer to the sacrifice as such by way of metonymy.
מִדָּם	Prep. + Nom. Masc. Sing. – of	Here a min of derivation

וּבַל־אֶשָׂא	Conj. + Neg. + Qal Impf. 1 Com. Sing. From אָשַׂא - Or not I will take	Root means to “lift, carry or take.” Here it is used figuratively as in to “lift up” or “bear up” their names.
אֶת־שְׂמוֹתָם	Dir. Obj. + Nom. Masc. Plural + 3 Leupold - the idolotors Masc. Plural Suffix - their names - the idols	K/D
עַל־שִׁפְתָי	Prep. + Nom. Fem. Dual form + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - Upon my lips	

The imperfect tense of וַיִּבְּבוּ is a frequentative imperfect, indicating an action which is regularly repeated. Those who chase after other gods regularly and repeatedly multiply their pains. Similarly, the imperfects of אֶסֶיף and אֶשָׂא would also be frequentative, as in to regularly and repeatedly refuse to pour out their libations or take their names upon my lips. There is some difference of opinion as to whether the names mentioned are the names of the idols themselves or the idolotors who worship them. Since the subject of the sentence is the idolotors, it seems more likely that the idolotors’ names are those referred to.

This verse flows nicely after and with verse three in the realm of Hebrew poetry. Whereas verse three mentioned the positive aspect of fellowship, verse four mentions the negative. Just as delightful as the fellowship of believers is to the psalmist, that disgusting is the thought of fellowship with the idolotors.

In application, this is a far more difficult verse to deal with than verse three, especially in our society of tolerance. Yet it is important for us to draw the line between refusing to “offer sacrifices” to the false gods of our world and shunning or ostracizing anyone outside of our WELS. The thought of the two verses together is still quite clear, however. It ought to please us to gather together with fellow believers rather than shunning the gathering of believers for the friendship of the unbelievers.

Translation

They will multiply their pains who obtain another in exchange. I will not pour out their libations of blood, and I will not take their names upon my lips.

NIV - The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take their names upon my lips.

Verse Five

5 יְהוָה מִנְתַּחֲלָקִי וְכוֹסֵי אֶתָּה תוֹמִיךָ גּוֹרְלִי:

Verse: 5

Vocable

יְהוָה

Form & Translation

Proper Noun - The Lord

Significance/Syntax

מִנְתַּחֲלָקִי

Nom. Fem. Sing. Constr. Of מְנָה

The feminine noun identifies the choice

+ Nom. Masc. Sing. Of הַלֶּקֶת + 1

parts of the sacrificial animals that were to

Com. Sing. Suffix- My chosen portion

be given to the priests and Levites. The masculine noun refers to a share of landed property assigned or a share in the inheritance. The allusion here is to the special relationship of the Levites which resulted in arrangements for the maintenance of the Temple personnel from

the offerings and not from any land which they worked themselves. (TWOT I, 293)

The figure here signifies that God is the satisfying draught that refreshes and invigorates the soul. (cf. John 4)

The word is here taken as a mispointing of

תִּזְמַךְ. It then has the meaning of “take hold of, obtain, acquire, hold fast.” it is used of God’s sovereign ordering of the affairs of history. (TWOT II, 973) K/D believes the word to be the Hiphil form of the verb יִזְמַךְ which has the meaning “to make broad.” In either case it refers to God’s sovereignty over our lot in life, whether it be the lot itself, or what is involved in the lot.

Root = גָּרַל “to be gritty, stoney” - the noun then has the meaning “lot, portion, inheritance.” It refers to some article like a stone which was thrown or allowed to fall in a way so as to determine a choice. In some cases not only the lot itself but what was chosen is called lot, and one’s circumstances or even life as a whole is one’s lot. (TWOT I, 171) One of the most important uses of the lot occurred in the division of the land.

וּכּוּסִי
 Conj. + Nom. Fern. Sing. + 1
 Com. Sing. Suffix - And my cup

אֶתְּךָ
 Pers. Pronoun 2 Masc. Sing. - You

תִּזְמַךְ
 Qal Act. Participle from יִזְמַךְ -
 Hold

גִּזְרָלִי
 Nom. Masc. Sing. + 1 Com.
 Sing. Suffix - My lot

The participle indicates an action that is in progress but not subject to interruption. The psalmist here indicates that his lot in life is continually in the Lord’s care because the Lord is his lot in life. The new strophe moves into the realm of the present blessedness in this life which the psalmist has because of his relationship with his God.

Again a standard of faith for which every Christian strives, to see his life as being completely encompassed in God. So often we deal with people who see God as being only one part of their lives. Here the psalmist shows us that true happiness in life comes when every part of our lives finds its place in our relationship with God.

Translation

*The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup. You hold my lot.
 NIV - Lord you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure.*

Verse Six

6 חֲטָלִים נָפְלוּ־לִי בַּנְּעָמִים אֶף־נִחַלְתָּ שְׂפָרָה עָלַי:

Verse: 6
Vocable

Form & Translation

Significance/Syntax

חִבְּלִים	Nom. Masc. Plural of בְּלָה - The lines	The word refers to “measuring lines,” and may, by metonymy, designate the tracts that are measured off by the surveyor’s lines.
נָפְלוּ-לִי	Qal Perf. 3 Com. Plural of נָפַל + Prep. + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - Have fallen for me	This is a specific, idiomatic use referring back to the casting of lots.
בְּנִעְמִים	Prep. + Def. Art. + Masc. Plural Adj. נְעִים - In pleasant places	Root = נָעַם “be pleasant, sweet, delightful”- This is the common Ugaritic root for “good.” It is used to characterize various concrete terms, as here describing the tract of land. (TWOT II)
אֲף־נַחֲלָת	Conj. + Nom. Fern. Sing. - Even a heritage	Root = נָחַל “to obtain, acquire a possession, inherit” - The root basically signifies giving or receiving property which is part of a permanent possession. The noun connotes that which is or may be passed on as an inheritance, that which is one’s by virtue of ancient fight, and that which is one’s permanently. The true spiritual heritage of the godly was especially and figuratively represented by Aaron, the priests and the Levites, who had no property to pass on to their sons, but who really had the greatest heritage of all - the Lord Himself. (TWOT II, 570)
שִׁפְרָה	Qal Perf. 3 Fem. Sing. Of שָׁפַר - Is beautiful	The verb means to “rub, polish, make shining; to be shining, beautiful.” This is its only usage.
עָלַי	Prep. + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix, Pausal form - For me	

Verse six continues the line of thought begun in verse five. The psalmist compares himself to an Israelite of the time of the conquest of Canaan, when the promised land was originally divided among the people. The land was divided by lot, and those who received broad tracts of land in pleasant places were considered to be the most fortunate. It is to this that the psalmist compares his entire lot in life, not because he has received a marvelous piece of land or material wealth, but because of his relationship with his Lord.

Here the thought from verse five goes forward. Whereas in verse five we see that our relationship with our Lord should encompass our entire lives, in verse six we see that this relationship is better than any material blessing we might have. With the Lord as our Refuge, our lives are already most blessed.

Translation

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places, even a heritage is beautiful for me.

NIV - The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

Verse Seven

7 אֲבָרַךְ אֶת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲצֵנִי אֶף־לַיְלֹת יִסְרֹנֵי כְלִיּוֹתַי:

Verse: 7

Vocable

אֲבָרַךְ

Form & Translation

Piel Impf. 1 Com. Sing. Of בָּרַךְ -
I bless

Significance/Syntax

The verb meanings, “to kneel, bless, praise, salute,” show an association between kneeling and receiving a blessing.

אֶת־יְהוָה

Dir. Obj. + Proper Noun - The Lord

אֲשֶׁר

Rel. Pronoun - Who

יַעֲצֵנִי

Qal Perf. 3 Masc. Sing. Of יָעַץ +
1 Com. Sing. Suffix, Pausal form
- Gives me counsel

Root meaning is “to counsel, advise.”
Scripture often speaks of the counsel of the Lord. Noteworthy is the overruling power of God as He nullifies and frustrates the plans of men. (Psalm 33:10; e.g. II Samuel 15:31 & 17:14)

אֶף־לַיְלֹת

Conj. + Nom. Masc. Plural - In the night also

יִסְרֹנֵי

Piel Perf. 3 Com. Plural of יָסְרַן +
1 Com. Sing. Suffix –Instructs me

Root meaning is “to chasten, correct, punish, admonish, exhort, instruct,” and denotes correction (or discipline) which results in education.

כְּלִיּוֹנֵי

Nom. Fem. Plural of כְּלִיָּהּ + 1
Com. Sing. Suffix, Pausal form -
My heart

Root = כָּלָה “to be completed.” Literal meaning of the noun is “reins, kidneys.” By metonymy the word refers to the innermost parts of a person, or then even “inmost thoughts” or “conscience.”

The imperfect is once again frequentative, while the perfects are perfects of certainty. Here the perfect tenses of יַעֲצֵנִי and יִסְרֹנֵי express actions which are confidently expected. Although the psalmist has already received instruction and counsel from the Lord in the past, he has no doubt that it will also continue into the future. This, too, is a reason for which his present life is blessed. It is the Lord, his Refuge, who counsels and instructs him on the proper path to take in this life.

Application of this verse might consist in reminding ourselves and our hearers that God’s law is intended for our good. With His law God is not trying to rain on our parade, or make our lives miserable. Instead, as our creator, He is showing us the way in which we will be able to live the happiest and healthiest lives, namely, when we are continually guided by his counsel and instruction.

Translation

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. In the night also my heart instructs me.

NIV - I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.

Verse Eight

8 שׁוֹתִי יְהוָה לְנַגְדֵי תַמִּיד כִּי מִימִינִי בַל־אֲמוּט:

Verse: 8**Vocable**

שׁוֹתִי

Form & TranslationPiel Perf. 1 Com. Sing. Of שָׁוָה -
I keep**Significance/Syntax**Root meaning is “to agree with, be(come)
like; to set, place.”

יְהוָה

Proper Noun - The Lord

לְנִגְדִי

Prep. + Prep. + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - Before me

תָּמִיד

Nom. Masc. Sing. - Always

כִּי מִיְמִינִי

Conj. + Prep. + Nom. Fem. Sing.
+ 1 Com. Song. Suffix - because
at my right hand

Right hand indicates the position of honor

בְּלֹא־מוֹט

Neg. + Niphal Impf. 1 Com. Sing.
Of מוֹט - Not I shall be movedRoot meaning of the verb is “to totter, shake,
slip.” This verb, which generally occurs as a
figure of speech referring to great insecurity,
becomes a verb which denotes
dependability and certainty when used as it
is here referring to God and prefixed with a
negative.

In this verse the psalmist concludes the strophe dealing with present blessedness. He states his reaction to all that he has said in verses five through seven with the perfect tense, indicating that in his mind keeping or setting the Lord always before him is a completed act, yet it has continuing effects in the present as well as into the future. Why? Because with the Lord at his right hand (the place of honor) he knows that he cannot be shaken or moved. The imperfect indicates the incompleteness of being moved. The negative then finishes the thought, the act of being moved or shaken will never be completed.

Here the application simply follows the rest of the strophe as a logical conclusion. Knowing that perfect happiness is found in an encompassing relationship with the Lord, and also in the Lord’s counsel and instruction for our lives, certainly our reaction is the same. We strive to keep or set the Lord always before us so that we may never be moved or shaken from that relationship which brings true happiness.

Translation

I keep the Lord before me always, because with him at my right hand I will not be moved.

NIV - I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Verse Nine

9 לָכֵן שָׂמַח לְבִי וַיִּגַּל כְּבוֹדִי אֶף־בְּשָׂרֵי יִשְׁכַּן לְבַטַּח:

Verse: 9**Vocable**

לָכֵן

Form & Translation

Prep. + Adv. - Therefore

Significance/Syntax

שָׂמַח

Qal Perf. 3 Masc. Sing - Is glad

The root denotes being glad or joyful with
the whole disposition as indicated by its
association with the heart, the soul, and with
the lighting up of the eyes (Proverbs 15:30).
Many occasions cheer a man, but the Lord

and His salvation are cited most frequently as the reason for joy. (TWOT II, 879)

לְבִי	Nom. Masc. Sing. Of לֵב + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - My heart	
וַיִּגַּל	Waw consec. + Qal Impf. 3 Masc. Sing. Of גִּיל – And rejoices	Root meaning is “to circle around” from which such ideas as “to circle in joy” are readily derived. The root meaning is more applicable to vigorous, enthusiastic expressions of joy. (TWOT I, 159)
כְּבוֹדִי	Nom. Masc. Sing. + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - My soul	Root = כָּבַד “to be heavy, to be weighty” - rarely used literally. Here perhaps a misvocalized reference to “liver” (the heavy organ) spoken of as we do the heart. Thus, “my glory rejoices” may mean “my liver rejoices.” Of course, it is not the liver literally, but the person. Therefore the LXX translates “tongue.” (TWOT I, 427)
אֶפְסָרִי	Conj. + Nom. Masc. Sing. + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - My body also	בָּשָׂר = flesh; body
יִשְׁכַּן לְבֶטֶחַ	Qal Impf. 3 Masc. Sing. Of שָׁכַן + Prep. + Nom. Masc. Sing. - Dwells secure	שָׁכַן underscores the idea not of loftiness but of nearness and closeness. בֶּטֶחַ, the root of בִּטַּח, = “trust in, feel safe.” The basic idea is firmness or solidity. It expresses the sense of well-being and security which results from having something or someone in whom to place confidence. (TWOT I, 101) In general the noun is used two ways: 1) Promise that those rightly related to God will dwell securely; 2) Indication of transitory nature of any security other than God’s.

In verse nine the psalmist turns his attention to the future. Right now (perfect tense) his heart is glad due to his relationship with the Lord. His soul continually (imperfect tense, frequentative) rejoices. His final conclusion of faith is this: his body also will dwell securely. Here the progressive imperfect is employed, describing an action which is not yet finished, yet one which he is certain will come to pass. With the Lord as his refuge, the psalmist is sure of what he hopes for, namely, the preservation for which he asked at the beginning of the psalm.

Translation

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices. My body also dwells securely.

NIV - Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

Verse Ten

10 כִּי לֹא־תֵעֹזֵב נַפְשִׁי לְשֵׂאוֹל לֹא־תִתֶּן חַסִּידְךָ לְרָאוֹת שְׁחָת׃

Verse: 10

Vocable

Vocable	Form & Translation	Significance/Syntax
כִּי	Conj. - For	
לֹא־תֵעֹזֵב	Neg. + Qal Impf. 2 Masc. Sing. Of עֹזֵב - Not you do give up	The basic meaning is clearly seen in its literal use where it has three distinct emphases: to depart, to abandon, and to loose. The word is also used figuratively with man or God as the subject, the meaning then being to forsake.
נַפְשִׁי	Nom. Fem. Sing. + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - Me	
לְשֵׂאוֹל	Prep. + Nom. Fern. Sing. - To sheol	
לֹא־תִתֶּן	Neg. + Qal Impf. 2 Masc. Sing. Of תִּתֶּן - Not you will give	Every meaning given this verb can be seen as a literal or figurative action of the hand.
חַסִּידְךָ	Adj. + 2 Masc. Sing. Suffix - Your Godly one	From חִסַּד meaning, “One who is set apart unto the Lord”
לְרָאוֹת	Prep. + Qal Inf. Cstr. Of רָאָה - To see	Verb carries the meanings “to see, to perceive, or to experience”
שְׁחָת	Nom. Fem. Sing - The pit or destruction	

The imperfects with the negatives show confidence that these incompleting actions will never see completion. The Lord will never turn the psalmist over to sheol, nor will He ever allow him to see destruction. This verse gets the most attention in the Acts references. Peter reminds us that the psalm is Messianic when he tells us that David was a prophet speaking about Christ. Certainly David died and was buried, and his body did decay. Christ, on the other hand, was not abandoned to the grave but was raised from the dead on the third day before his body could see decay. The resurrection, then, is the fulfillment of this verse.

We, like David, can, however, also confidently pray this verse. This verse is the reason for our confidence and rejoicing of verse nine. Because Christ did rise from the dead and fulfill this prophecy, we know that we too will not be abandoned to grave but will also rise from the dead on the last day. Although our bodies may decay while here on earth, we know that we will be given glorified bodies for all eternity. Here again is the statement of faith in which we are certain of what we do not see.

Translation

For you will not give me up to sheol, nor will you allow your godly one to experience destruction.

NIV - because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

Verse Eleven

11 תוֹדִיעֲנִי אֲרַח חַיִּים שְׁבַע שְׁמֵחוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵיךָ נְעֻמוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נְצַח׃

Verse: 11

Vocable

Form & Translation

Significance/Syntax

תוֹדִיעַנִי	Hiphil Impf. 2 Masc. Sing. Of יָדַע + 1 Com. Sing. Suffix - You do show me or make me to know	
אֶרֶח	Nom. Masc. Sing. Cstr. – The path of	From אָרַח “to go, be on the way”
חַיִּים	Nom. Masc. Plural – Life	From חָי “to live” - The noun, חַי, means “living, alive” with the plural then taking the meaning “life.”
שָׂבַע	Nom. Masc. Sing. Cstr. Of שָׂבַע - Fullness of	From שָׂבַע “to be(come) filled”
שְׂמֵחֹת	Nom. Fem. Plural of שְׂמָחָה - Joy	From שָׂמַח “to shine cheerfully, be joyful, glad”
אֶת־פְּנֵיךָ	Dir. Obj. + Nom. Masc. Plural of פָּנָה + 2 Masc. Sing. Suffix – In your presence	From the verb פָּנָה “to turn to, towards” - The noun then takes the meaning “face” or “countenance.” To be in one’s presence is connected with and naturally produced by beholding one’s face.
נְעֻמֹת	Fem. Plural Adj. – Pleasures	Verb Root = נָעַם “to be pleasant, agreeable” Noun Root = נָעִים “pleasant, agreeable, sweet”
בְּיָמִינְךָ	Prep. + Nom. Fem. Sing. Of יָמִין + 2 Masc. Sing. Suffix - In your right hand	This location is specifically noted as a place where godly people taste eternal pleasures and delights. (TWOT I, 382)
נֶצַח	Nom. Masc. Sing. – Forevermore	From נָצַח “to be pure, innocent, faithful” - The noun then takes the meanings, “truth, uprightness, faithfulness, permanency, perpetuity, eternity”

Here again we see the frequentative imperfect. Making to know the path of life is a regular, repetitive action by the Lord on the psalmist’s behalf. In context we can take the word life to mean eternal life. What follows is simply a description of that eternal life. Whereas present life here was described as blessed and joyful because of the psalmist’s relationship with the Lord, the fullness of joy will be found in the Lord’s presence, and eternal pleasures are found in the Lord’s right hand. As pleased and satisfied as the psalmist is with his present lot in life, so much more is he looking forward to the perfect joy which will be his in eternity.

This verse finds application as the conclusion both to this strophe and to the entire psalm. This is the final goal of faith, to finally realize that which we hope for and that which we do not see. The certainty in the final strophe finds its end here, in the fact that we are confident of eternal life in heaven. The entire psalm, then, also finds its end here. The prayer is for preservation, and the confidence is in the fact that preservation is certain, if not here, then in heaven with the Lord.

Translation

You make me to know the path of life. Fullness of joy is in your presence, and pleasures are in your right hand forevermore.

NIV - You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Practical Uses

Psalm 16 appears in Christian Worship as the Psalm of the day in all three series on the Second Sunday of Easter. The reference to the resurrection is the obvious connection. One possible theme and parts might be:

Theme: Set the Lord Always Before You

- I. He Has Given You a Delightful Inheritance
- II. He Leads You In the Path of Life

The psalm might also lend itself to a hospital visitation, especially if the patient is close to death. Verses five through eight could be used as a reminder of the blessing of having lived a life with God as their refuge, while verses nine through eleven would then serve as comfort, pointing to the blessed life which lies ahead. The psalm might then also be used as a funeral text with a theme and parts similar to this simplistic example:

Theme: The Lord is My Refuge

- I. Here(In Life)
- II. In Eternity (In Death)

Verse eleven is the only verse of this psalm used as a proof passage in the blue Kuske catechism. It is used only twice, both times to describe the blessed joys of everlasting life.

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