



PSALM 111

"YHWH's deeds"

Translation and Performance Notes

LEGEND FOR COLORED WORDS:

Key term

Exegesis of emotions

Imagery

Other translation challenges

Hebrew text	verse	English Close-but-Clear Translation
הָלְלוּ יְהוָה אֹדָה יְהוָה בְּכָל־לֵב בְּסוּד יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַדָּה:	1	Praise Yah! I will praise YHWH whole-heartedly, in the council of upright people, in the congregation.
גְּדֹלִים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה אֲדַרְשֵׁם לְכָל־חַפְצֵיהֶם:	2	YHWH's deeds are great, studied by all who delight in them.
הוֹדִיָּה־גִּדְרָא פָּעֻלוֹ אֲבַדְקָתוֹ עֲמֶדֶת לְעַד:	3	His work is glorious and majestic, and his righteousness endures forever.
זָכַר עֲשֵׂה לִנְפֹל לְאֹתָיו חַסֵּד וְרַחֲמִים יִתְּנָה:	4	He has caused his wonderful acts to be remembered. YHWH is merciful and compassionate.
טָרַף נַתַּן לִירְאָיו יִזְכֹּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ:	5	He gave food to those who feared him. He will remember his covenant forever.
כַּחַּ מַּעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לִתֵּת לָהֶם נַחֲלָה גּוֹיִם:	6	He showed his people the power of his deeds by giving them nations as an inheritance.
מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט אֲצִוְיֹת כָּל־פְּקוּדָיו:	7	The deeds of his hands are faithful and just. All his commandments are enduring,
סְמוּכִים לְעַד לְעוֹלָם עֲשׂוּיִם בְּאֱמֶת וְיִשְׁרָאֵל:	8	established forever and ever, practiced in faithfulness and uprightness.
פָּדוּת שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ	9	He sent redemption to his people.

צוה-לעולם ברייתו קדוש ונורא שמו:		He commanded his covenant forever. His name is holy and awesome .
רִאשִׁית חֲכָמָה וְרֵאֲתָ יְהוָה שֶׁכֶּל טוֹב לְכָל-עֹשִׂיהֶם אֲהַלְלוּ עֲמֻדָת לְעֹד:	10	Fearing YHWH is the beginning of wisdom ; all who practice them have good insight . His praiseworthiness endures forever.

GENERAL TRANSLATION TIPS FOR THIS PSALM:

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

TRANSLATION TIPS: PSALM AS A WHOLE

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

Additionally, these are elements that will guide decisions about **performance** in oral translations, songs, poems, or other kinds of art based on this psalm.

1. Overview

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

- **Title—what title best describes this unique psalm?**
 - "YHWH's deeds"
- **Purpose—why was this psalm written?**
 - This psalm was written **to praise YHWH for his deeds of covenant faithfulness.**
- **Content—In summary, what is said in this psalm?**
 - YHWH's deeds are great and his commandments are enduring.
- **Message—what is the general theme of this psalm? What seems to be the main point the psalmist wanted his audience to realize by hearing this psalm?**
 - YHWH, our God, has done great deeds for us, and, we his people, do his commandments.
 - See [Prominence Feature 2: Great Deeds](#) for more detail.

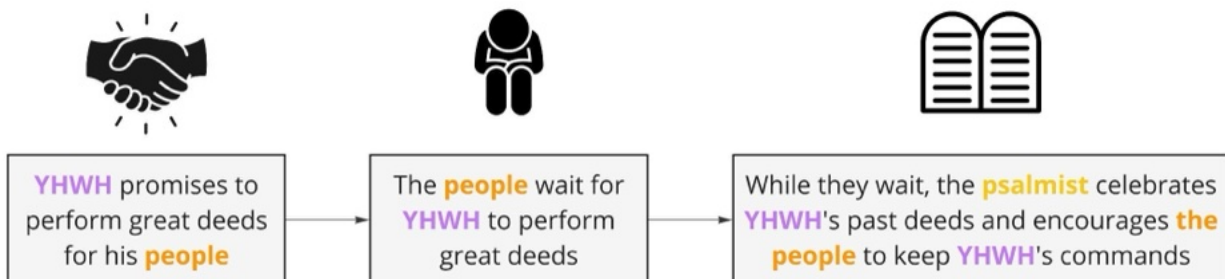
2. Story Behind the Psalm and Background Situation

Every psalm has a coherent story behind it. However, many psalms are not written in typical "story" format, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Here, we attempt to understand the story and background that prompted the psalmist to write.

- **Story Behind**-How do the various parts of the psalm fit together into a single, coherent story? What is the main message/theme conveyed by this "story behind"?

-  YHWH promises to perform great deeds for his people.  The people wait for YHWH to perform great deeds.  As they wait, the psalmist celebrates YHWH's great deeds of the past. YHWH's past deeds always happened according to a pattern:
 - YHWH promised to perform great deeds for his people, then
 - YHWH performed great deeds for his people, and then
 - The people celebrated YHWH's great deeds and kept his commands.
- As he composes his psalm, the psalmist anticipates that the people will praise YHWH and keep his commands as they wait. Then YHWH will perform great deeds for his people, and the people will celebrate YHWH's great deeds.

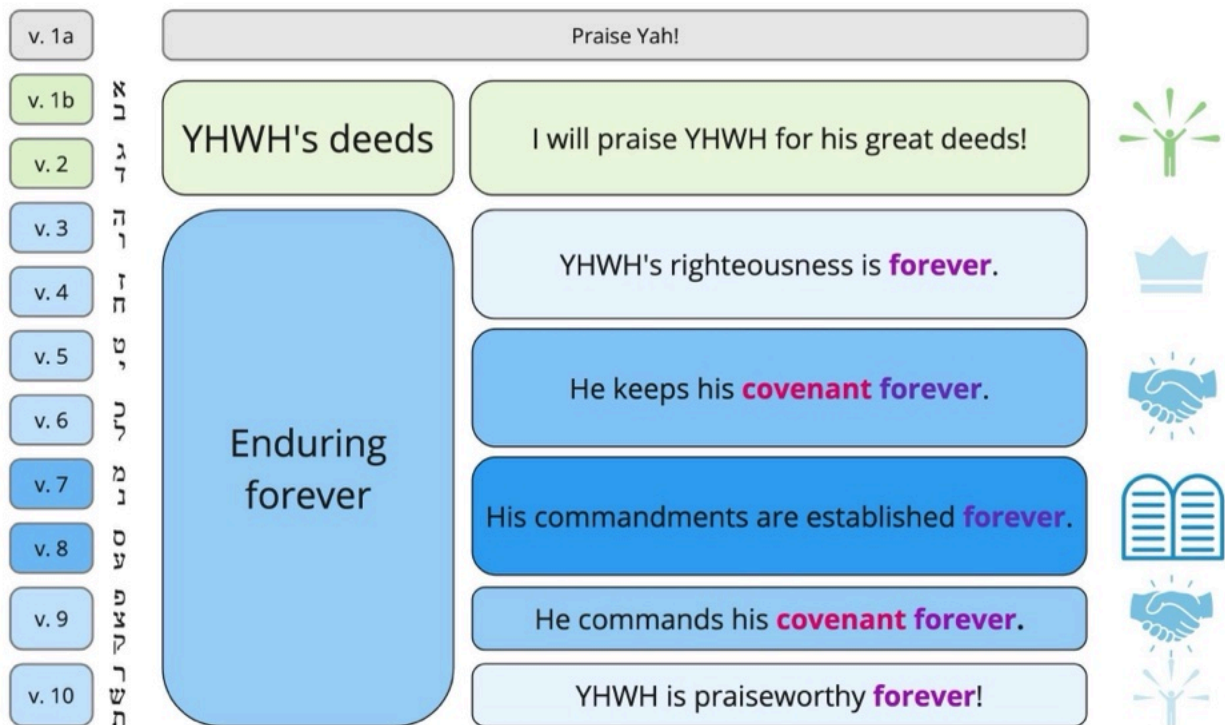
- **Background Situation**-what are the series of events leading up to the time in which the psalm was written?



3. Layout

Knowing the layout of the psalm by sections helps us to understand the progression of thought as the poem progresses.

How to read the visual below: The picture below shows the main “chunks” or pieces of the poem. Verse numbers appear on the left. The second column has a title for each section. The large third column contains a brief summary of the section’s content. As you read through the content column, you will see important words and ideas highlighted in similar colors. The icons on the right may be used as memory aids.

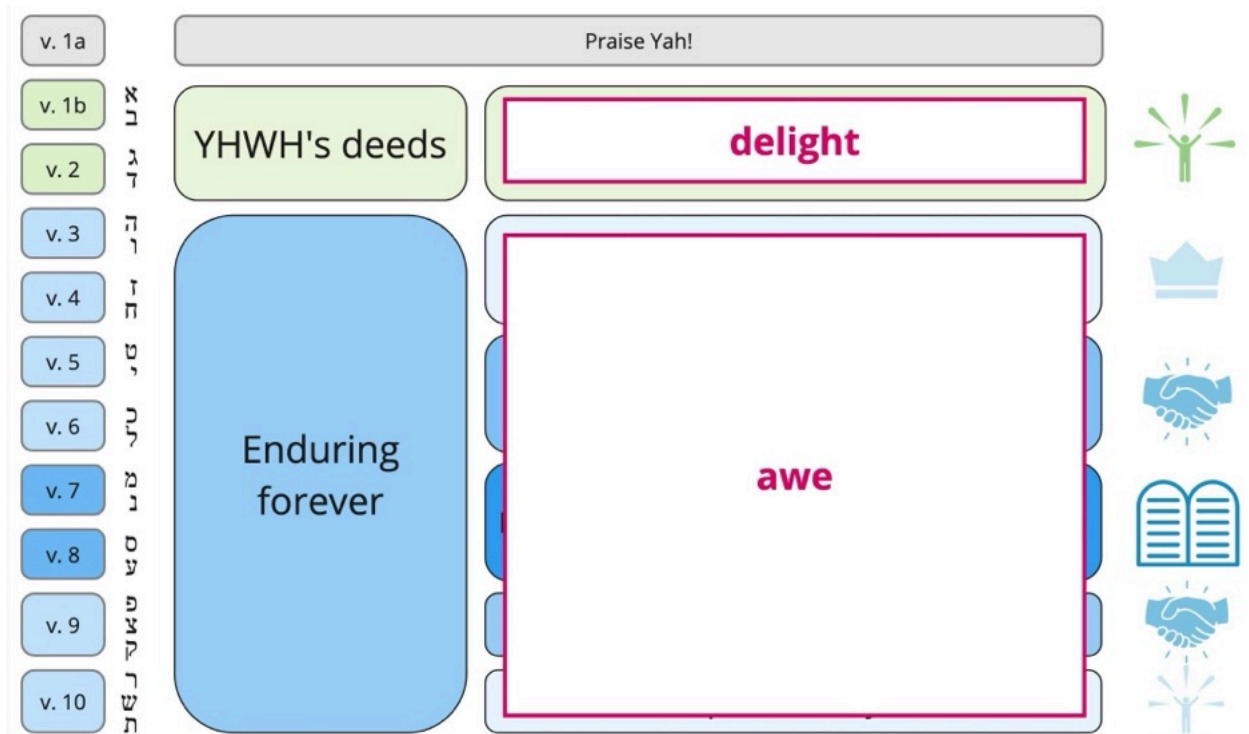


Progression—what is the flow of thought as the poem progresses?

- Broadly speaking, this psalm is about YHWH's great deeds and character.
 - The first major section, verses 1-2, is an introduction:
 - the psalmist declares his intention to praise (verse 1)
 - the psalmist introduces the theme of the poem (verse 2).
 - The second major section, verses 3-10, contains the praise itself, focusing on:
 - YHWH's character (verses 3-4)
 - YHWH acts of covenant faithfulness (verses 5-6)
 - YHWH's commandments (verses 7-8)
 - how YHWH's people should respond to his great deeds (verses 9-10).

4. Emotions

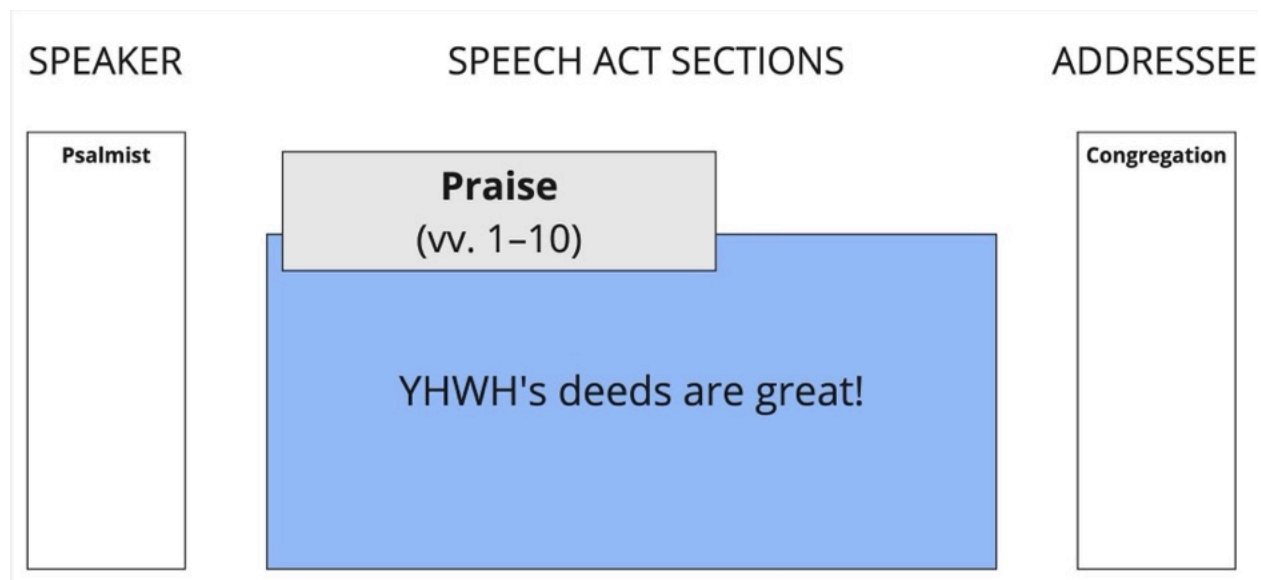
Part of poetry is communicating emotion. Each section, and even each verse, can contain a number of different emotions. Here are the main emotional themes of each section:



5. Participants and Speech Acts

In poetry, it is important to keep track of who is speaking, who is the audience, and what it is that the speaker is trying to do with his words.

How to read the visual below: In the chart below, the left-hand column identifies the speaker, who is the psalmist. The right-hand column identifies the audience, who is the Congregation in this psalm. The middle column tells what the speaker is trying to do with his words (his speech acts) in each section.



6. Poetics

In this section, we ask, "what kinds of artistic beauty did the psalmist incorporate into the poem to reinforce its message?" (See Poetic Features video and layer for more details.)

YHWH's Deeds from A to Z

הַלְלוּ יְהוָה	1	Praise Yah!
אֶתְּהַלֵּל יְהוָה בְּכָל־לֵב בְּסֹד וְשָׁרִים וְעֵדָה: גְּדֹלִים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה דְּרוּשִׁים לְכָל־תַּפְצִיחָם:	2	I will praise YHWH whole-heartedly in the council of upright people, in the congregation. YHWH's deeds are great, studied by all who delight in them.
חֲדָד־וְהִגֵּר פָּעָלוֹ וְצִדְקָתוֹ עֲמֻדָּה לְעַד: זָכַר עֲשֵׂה לְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו חֲסִינוֹ וְרַחֲמֵם יְהוָה:	3	His work is glorious and majestic, and his righteousness endures forever.
	4	He has caused his wonderful acts to be remembered. YHWH is merciful and compassionate.
אֶרֶץ נָתַן לִירְאָיו זִכָּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ: כִּסֵּם מַעֲשָׂיו הַגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לִתְּתָה לָאֻמִּם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם:	5	He gave food to those who feared him. He will remember his covenant forever.
	6	He showed his people the power of his deeds by giving them nations as an inheritance.
מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט צִוִּים כָּל־פְּקֻדּוֹתָיו: סִמּוּכִים לְעַד לְעוֹלָם עֲשׂוּם בְּאֱמֶת וְיִשְׁרָ:	7	The deeds of his hands are faithful and just. All his commandments are enduring,
	8	established forever and ever, practiced in faithfulness and uprightness.
סָדָת י שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ צִוִּה לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ קָדוֹשׁ וְנוֹרָא שְׁמוֹ: רָאשִׁית חֵכְמָה רֵאשִׁית יוֹנָה שֶׁקֶל טוֹב לְכָל־עֹשֵׂיהֶם תִּהְיֶה לְעַד עֲמֻדָּה לְעַד:	9	He sent redemption to his people. He commanded his covenant forever. His name is holy and awesome.
	10	Fearing YHWH is the beginning of wisdom; all who practice them have good insight. His praiseworthiness endures forever.

Psalms 111 and 112 are **acrostic poems**. In an acrostic poem, each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (so is Psalm 112).

The alphabet is a symbol of completeness.¹ In an acrostic poem, the poet takes a topic and explains it carefully and completely, from every possible angle. The purpose is that the reader would gain a thorough, detailed understanding of the topic, so that he or she understands it “from A to Z.” In Psalm 111, the topic is “YHWH's deeds” (מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה).

¹ See Gottwald 1954, 23–32; IVP Dictionary, “Acrostic”; Soll, Anchor Bible Dictionary; Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry 2001.

7. Prominence

Prominence—what words, phrases, or ideas are most important in this psalm?: It is also important to consider how the author chose to draw attention to certain parts of the psalm. Here are the parts of the psalm that we believe are most prominent, and thus should be most prominent in a performance of the psalm.

Prominence Feature 1: Eternal Commands

תְּלִלְךָ יְהוָה	1	Praise Yah!
אֲדָגָה יְהוָה בְּכָל־לֵב בְּסֹד יֹשְׁרִים וְעֵדָה: גְּדֻלִּים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה אֲרוּשִׁים לְכָל־חַסְדֵּיהֶם:	2	I will praise YHWH whole-heartedly in the council of upright people, in the congregation. YHWH's deeds are great, studied by all who delight in them.
הוֹדִיעַדָּר פָּעָלוֹ אֲצַדִּיקָלּוֹ עֲמֻנָתוֹ לְעֹד: זָכַר עֲשֵׂה לְנַפְלָאֲתָיו סֶטֶן וְרַחֲמִים יְהוָה:	3	His work is glorious and majestic, and his righteousness endures forever .
אֶרֶב גֶּמֹל לִירְאָיו זָכַר וְלְעֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ: כֹּס גִּזְעָיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לְתֵת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם:	4	He has caused his wonderful acts to be remembered. YHWH is merciful and compassionate.
מַעֲשֵׂי יְדֵי אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט לְאֱמָנִים כָּל־פְּסוּדָיו: קִמּוּכִים לְעֹד לְעֹלָם עֲשׂוּיִם בְּאֱמֶת וְיִשָּׁר:	5	He gave food to those who feared him. He will remember his covenant forever .
פָּדוּת י שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ צִוָּה וְלְעֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ קָדוֹשׁ וְנֹרָא שְׁמוֹ: רְאִישִׁית חֵכְמָה י רְאֵת יְהוָה שֶׁכֶל זֹבֵב לְכָל־עֲשִׂיתָם אֲתַלְתְּלוּ עֲמֻנָתוֹ לְעֹד:	6	He showed his people the power of his deeds by giving them nations as an inheritance.
	7	The deeds of his hands are faithful and just. All his commandments are enduring , established forever and ever , practiced in faithfulness and uprightness.
	8	
	9	He sent redemption to his people. He commanded his covenant forever .
	10	His name is holy and awesome . Fearing YHWH is the beginning of wisdom; all who practice them have good insight. His praiseworthiness endures forever .

Verses 7-8 are the most prominent verses in the psalm. Within those verses, the words 'deeds/practice,' 'faithfulness,' and 'commands' are the most prominent words. We know this because this psalm contains a special structure called a *chiasm* that spans from verse 3b to verse 10c. In a chiasm, the first line and the last line share repeated or similar features, and then the second line and the second-to-last line share repeated or similar features, and so on. The lines that match in the middle are the focus of the chiasm (verses 7-8).

The middle of the chiasm contains the repeated Hebrew roots for **deeds/practice** (עשה) and **faithful(ness)** (אמת) in verses 7 and 8. So, Psalm 111 is a celebration of YHWH's *faithful deeds*. Although the psalm celebrates many of YHWH's deeds, the chiastic structure highlights one deed in particular: YHWH's **commands** (verse 7b).

The psalmist has placed the word "commands" at the center of the chiasm, he describes the commands with the phrase "forever and ever", and he makes the commands the subject of three consecutive verses (verses 7b–8b). Furthermore, the commands are surrounded by the threefold repetition of the root **faithful(ness)/enduring** (אמת/אמן). YHWH's commands are both given (by him) in *faithfulness* and they are to be done (by his people) in *faithfulness*.

Prominence Feature 2: Great Deeds

תללו יהוה	1	Praise Yah!
אודה יהוה בכל־לִבִּי בסוד ישרים ועדה: גדלים מעשי יהוה דרושים לכל־חַפְצֵיהֶם:	2	I will praise YHWH whole-heartedly in the council of upright people, in the congregation. YHWH's deeds are great, studied by all who delight in them.
הודו־והגדוּ קָשְׁלוֹ אֲצִדְקָתוֹ עַמְּדַת לְעַד: זְכֹר מַעֲשֵׂה לְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו חֲסִדוֹ וְרַחֲמֵי יְהוָה:	3	His work is glorious and majestic, and his righteousness endures forever.
	4	He has caused his wonderful acts to be remembered. YHWH is merciful and compassionate.
אָרַר נַתַּן לִירְאָיו יִזְכֹּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ: בְּכֹחַ מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לְתַת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם:	5	He gave food to those who feared him. He will remember his covenant forever.
	6	He showed his people the power of his deeds by giving them nations as an inheritance.
מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט אֲמָנִים כִּלְפִּקּוּדָיו: קְמוּיָם לְעַד לְעוֹלָם עֲשׂוּיָם בְּאֱמֶת וּבִישׁוּר:	7	The deeds of his hands are faithful and just. All his commandments are enduring, established forever and ever,
	8	practiced in faithfulness and uprightness.
פָּדוּת שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ צִוָּה לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ: קָדוֹשׁ וְנִוְרָא שְׁמוֹ: רְאִישִׁית חִכְמָה רְאֵת יְהוָה שָׂקֵל טוֹב לְכָל־עֹשִׂיהֶם תְּהַלְלוּ עַמְּדַת לְעַד:	9	He sent redemption to his people. He commanded his covenant forever. His name is holy and awesome.
	10	Fearing YHWH is the beginning of wisdom; all who practice them have good insight. His praiseworthiness endures forever.

The root that means to *do* or *deeds* (עשה) occurs six times in Psalm 111 (verses 2a, 4a, 6a, 7a, 8b, 10b), one time in each section and twice in the fourth section. The first four occurrences refer to YHWH's deeds (verses 2a, 4a, 6a, 7a), and the last two occurrences refer to the deeds of YHWH's people (verses 8b, 10b).

The repetition functions to highlight the theme of the psalm, which is YHWH's deeds. But the repetition also functions to make a point about how people ought to respond to YHWH's deeds. By using the word twice with people as the agent, the psalmist shows that the proper response to YHWH's deeds of faithfulness is that his people perform deeds of faithful obedience in return. In short, the covenant relationship between YHWH and his people is to be characterized by *doing* (עשה).

TRANSLATION TIPS, VERSE BY VERSE

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

VERSES 1-2: YHWH's Deeds

- The first two verses of the psalm (with the exception of the superscription in verse 1a) form a section.
 - These verses are not a part of the large *chiasm* of verses 3–10 that takes up most of the psalm (see [Prominence Feature 1: Eternal Commands](#) for more details).
 - These verses have the word **all** (כָּל) at the beginning and end of the section (verses 1a, 2b).
- Together, these two verses serve as a kind of introduction to the psalm:
 - in verse 1, the psalmist states his intention to 'praise YHWH', and
 - in verse 2, the psalmist states the main theme of his praise: 'YHWH's deeds' (verse 2a) and the human response to them (verse 2b).

VERSE 1

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

Praise Yah, *who has promised to rescue us from our enemies, to give us a king, and to give us the nations as our inheritance!* While we wait for YHWH to perform these great deeds, **I will praise YHWH whole-heartedly in the council of upright people** *which is here gathered together, that is, in the congregation.*

הַלְלוּ יְהוָה אוֹדֶה יְהוָה בְּכָל־לֵב בְּסוּד יֹשְׁרִים וְעֵדָה:	1	Praise Yah! I will praise YHWH whole-heartedly, in the council of upright people, in the congregation.
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- The first line of this verse, **praise Yah**, is the superscription of Psalm 111. Superscriptions can identify the psalmist, the instruments, the tune, the setting, and other information. Here it is giving 'other information,' namely, it is a call to praise YHWH.
 - We know that this line is a superscription because it does not fit in the acrostic structure of the rest of the psalm (see the Poetic Feature [YHWH's Deeds from A to Z](#) for more information).
 - **Yah** is a shortened form of the proper name YHWH.
 - Most English translations convey the meaning of the phrase by rendering it *Praise the Lord!* (ESV, NASB, NLT, etc.), and this is an acceptable option. But the CSB transliterates the phrase with the rendering *Hallelujah!*
 - In many cultures, special words whose meanings are not immediately clear can take on the role of incantations, that is, words with magical properties. In Africa, for example, this is often a problem with transliterated words like *hallelujah* and *amen*. For this reason, we recommend

a translation that brings out the meaning of the phrase, such as the Hausa CSB: *Praise YHWH!*² or the French NBS: *Praise the LORD (Yah)*!³

- In the second line of the verse, the phrase **I will praise** has several important features:
 - The phrase **I will praise** gives the purpose of the psalm as a whole, which is to praise YHWH.
 - The verb **praise** is an "action by which humans openly express recognition of what someone else has done or achieved."⁴ Many translations render this word as *thank* (NLT, CEV, GNT) or *give thanks* (ESV, NET).⁵ But *praise* is more appropriate in the context.⁶
 - The verb form is first-person future tense, but in a form (a *cohortative*) that means the psalmist is expressing his strong desire and intention to praise YHWH.⁷ For languages that lack this form (English lacks it), translators may render it as a first-person future tense verb.
 - The Hebrew word for **praise** in the second line of this verse (יִדָּה) is different from the word used in the first line (הִלֵּל). The two words are synonyms. The basic difference between the two is:
 - "the word in the first line emphasizes 'acclaim of,' 'boasting of,' or 'glorying in' an object,
 - the word in the second line emphasizes 'recognition' and 'declaration' of a fact, whether good or bad."⁸
 - The word translated **I will praise** begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *alef* (א). So, it starts the acrostic poem, in which each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Ps 112 is similar). For more detail, see [YHWH's Deeds From A to Z](#).
- Most English translations render the divine name **YHWH** as LORD. However, translators should seek to be clear that the name here is the personal name for Israel's God, which distinguishes him from all other gods or lords. An example of a translation that does this is the Hausa CSB, which renders it *Yahweh*.
- The Hebrew phrase we have rendered **whole-heartedly** (בְּכָל-לֵבָב) is important to the emotional exegesis of this psalm. It means that the psalmist's emotionally positive act of praise is being done with the fullness of the psalmist's emotional energy. The phrase is also a figure of speech. English translations often render it as *with all my heart*. The phrase here might hint at the famous commandment to love YHWH *with your whole heart* (בְּכָל-לֵבָבָהּ) (Deut 6:5).
- The phrase **in the council of upright people, in the congregation** has some important features:
 - The word **in** denotes location. It only appears once in the Hebrew, before the word **council** (סֵדָה). But, the word **in** relates to both the word **council** and to the word **congregation**. So, most English translations supply it before **congregation** also.
 - The Hebrew has a connecting word (often translated *and*) before the word **congregation** that many English translations retain (see NASB, NIV, CSB). However, this word may suggest to

² *Yabi Yahweh!*

³ *Louez le SEIGNEUR (Yah) !*

⁴ SDBH.

⁵ See also German translations LUT, HFA, NGÜ: *danken*; French PDV: *dire merci*.

⁶ So KJV, and see also ELB, GNB, ZÜR: *preisen*; French BDS, NVS: *célébrerai*; French NFC, S21: *louer/louera*.

⁷ Other examples include 1 Chr 23:30; 25:3; Ezra 3:11; Neh 12:24; see also NIDOTTE.

⁸ TWOT #847.

audiences that the council and the congregation are two different groups. They are not.⁹ In English and some other languages, this connecting word is not entirely necessary and can be left out (ESV, REB, NRSV).¹⁰

- **The council of upright people** (סֹד יְשָׁרִים) and **the congregation** (עֵדָה) probably refer to the same group of people.¹¹
 - The word **council** (סֹד) "can be translated as 'circle.' It was the free meeting together in time of leisure of the adult men...where the news of the day [was] exchanged."¹² The Hausa CSB renders it *public meeting*.¹³
 - The Hebrew word we have rendered **upright people** means "a person whose behavior is morally and ethically right."¹⁴ The Hebrew word itself is an adjective, and most English translations render it as *the upright* (ESV, NASB, NIV, CSB, NRSV), but here it clearly refers to people, and translators should make this clear. The NLT has *godly people*, but translators should be careful when using such phrases, because in some languages the word *godly* may connote that the people are somehow themselves gods. The Hausa CSB renders this phrase *honest people at heart*.¹⁵
 - Languages that lack distinct terms for each group can combine them into a single term in translation (such as the French NFC: *the assembled faithful*).¹⁶

VERSE 2

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

YHWH's deeds, *especially his deeds of redemption and acts of covenant faithfulness*, **are great, studied in Scripture by all who delight in them.**

גְּדֹלִים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה דְּרוּשִׁים לְכָל-חַפְצֵי יְהוָה:	2	YHWH's deeds are great, studied by all who delight in them .
--	---	---

- Elsewhere in the Psalms, **YHWH's deeds** are described as very great (Ps 92:6) and bringing joy (Ps 92:5-6), and they are associated with his wonderful works (נִפְלְאוֹת, Ps 107:21-24; 139:14). They are done in wisdom (Ps 104:24), and they include his work of creating man (Ps 139:14), his work of

⁹ The French NBS has *dans le conseil secret des gens droits comme dans la communauté* (in the secret council of upright people like in the community), which also seems to denote that these are two different groups. Also, this translation imports the idea of the council being secret, which is probably not the case.

¹⁰ Also French BDS, Spanish NVI, DHH.

¹¹ Compare with Prov 5:14 — בְּחֹדֶךָ קָהָל יְעָדָה.

¹² Kohler 1954:87-91.

¹³ *taron jama'a*.

¹⁴ SDBH.

¹⁵ *masu gaskiya a zuci*.

¹⁶ *les fidèles assemblés*.

sustaining creation (Ps 104:13, 24), and his work of rescuing his people (Pss 107:22, 24; 118:17), especially from Egypt (Ps 106:13).

- The word **deeds** is from the Hebrew root עָשָׂה, and this root is repeated throughout the psalm more than any other root. For more detailed information on this very prominent word, see [Prominence Feature 2: Great Deeds](#). Most English translations render the word as *works*.
 - Languages that require a verbal idea for this word can consider following the GNB: *the things the Lord does*.
- The verb we have translated as **studied** (דָּרַשׁ) has as its basic meaning to *seek*, and here it refers to an "action by which humans or deities make an intensive effort to obtain in-depth information about a certain object or event."¹⁷
 - The thing being sought/studied is **YHWH's deeds**, which probably refers to YHWH's deeds as they have been recorded in written Scripture.¹⁸ So, the gloss *studied* (ESV, NASV, NRSV) is appropriate here.¹⁹ But in some languages, the idea of studying YHWH's deeds may be difficult. In this case, a possibility is *pondered* (NIV, Hausa CLB).²⁰ The verb does not mean to *wait*, and so the NET's *eagerly awaited* does not really fit.
 - The clause in which this verb is found does not state the subject. The subject, which is **YHWH's deeds**, is found in the previous clause. If the target language requires the verb to have a subject, then translators may repeat the subject in the second clause, or supply a subject pronoun: *YHWH's deeds are great, YHWH's deeds are studied...* or *YHWH's deeds are great, they are studied...*
 - The verb is in a passive form in Hebrew, but some languages may require an active form, such as *all who delight in YHWH's deeds study them*.
 - The NLT renders the phrase *all who delight in him should ponder them*, and this is a possible interpretation of the verb form.²¹ However, the context does not clearly indicate that the action of the verb *study* is not actually occurring in reality (that is, it does not clearly indicate that it is in the *subjunctive* mood). So, we have rendered the verb as though the deeds are actually studied.
 - The fact that YHWH's deeds are studied by people (verse 2b) is evidence of the greatness of the deeds (verse 2a).
- The use of the word **delight** implies that the psalmist himself feels delight for YHWH's commands.
 - The pronoun **them** in the phrase **delight in them** refers to **YHWH's deeds**.

¹⁷ SDBH.

¹⁸ See Ezra 7:10.

¹⁹ French TOB: *étudient*; LSG; NBS, NVS, S21: *recherchées*; NFC: *recherchent*; Spanish NVI: *estudiadas*; DHH: *estudian*; BTX: *escudriñadas*.

²⁰ *tunani a kansu*. French PDV: *réfléchissent*; BDS: *sont méditées*.

²¹ JM §121i, which cites this verb as an example; see also Jerome.

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

VERSES 3-10: YHWH's Deeds

- These verses form a *chiasm*. See [Prominence Feature 1: Eternal Commands](#) for more detail.

VERSES 3-4

- Verses 3-4 are bound together as a subsection. There are two main reasons for this:
 - Each clause/line in these verses is focused on the present: **is... stands... has caused... is**.
 - Pairs of words praising YHWH appear at the beginning and end of the subsection: **glorious and majestic** (הוד־וְהַגֶּדֶר, verse 3a) and **merciful and compassionate** (חַנּוּן וְרַחֻם, verse 4b).²² It looks like this:

- similar verbal semantics: focus on present state (no reference point movement) - paired descriptions of YHWH	הוד־וְהַגֶּדֶר פָּעֻלוֹ אֲצִדְקָתוֹ עַמְּדַת לְעֹד:	3	His work is <i>glorious and majestic</i> , and his righteousness endures forever.
	וְכִי עָשָׂה לְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו חַנּוּן וְרַחֻם יְהוָה:	4	He has caused his wonderful acts to be remembered. YHWH is <i>merciful and compassionate</i> .

VERSE 3

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

YHWH is our king, and **His work is glorious and majestic, and his righteousness endures forever, even to the present day.**

הוד־וְהַגֶּדֶר פָּעֻלוֹ אֲצִדְקָתוֹ עַמְּדַת לְעֹד:	3	His work is glorious and majestic, and his righteousness endures forever.
--	---	--

- In Hebrew, the word order of the first clause **His work is glorious and majestic** is actually *glorious and majestic is his work*. This is for two reasons:
 - In Hebrew, the word **glorious** begins with the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet (ה), which is needed to continue the acrostic (see Poetic Features for more detail).
 - This word order emphasizes the characteristics **glorious and majestic**. Several English translations imitate this word order (ESV, NASB, NIV, LEB, NRSV). But strangely, none of these translations imitate the parallel word order in verse 4b, which literally says *merciful and compassionate is YHWH*. We have reversed the order of both lines for a more natural-sounding translation, and this change may be necessary in many languages. But translators may wish to imitate the Hebrew word order in both lines in order to bring out the original emphasis on the characteristics.

²² Lugt 2014, 236.

- In the phrase **his work**, the pronoun **his** refers to YHWH. The singular noun **work** (פְּעֻלָּה) is a collective; in other words, the word **work** does not refer to a single work, but to all works (plural) that YHWH does. Several translations render this phrase as a verbal idea, *everything he does* (NLT; see GNT, CEV, CSB, LUT, HFA, NGÜ). Other languages that require a verbal idea for such a phrase can imitate this translation.
- The words translated **glorious and majestic** (הוֹדֵד־וְהָדָר) are actually nouns (*glory* and *majesty*, see verse 7a for a similar noun-pair). However, they are best translated into English as adjectives. These words are usually used in the Bible to describe kings.²³
 - Bratcher and Reyburn point out that in some languages, it may be difficult to describe YHWH's deeds with abstract qualities like **glorious and majestic**. In such cases, a statement like *His works reveal (or demonstrate) his glory and majesty* may be more natural.²⁴
 - Additionally, some languages may need to render these two words as verbs. Bratcher and Reyburn suggest *show how people respect him and that he is powerful like a king*.²⁵
- The word **righteousness** is a key term that means a "pattern of behavior of humans or deities that is in accordance with the requirements of the divine law and generally aimed at establishing or restoring this pattern as a standard, which in certain cases requires a victory over evil and results in prosperity and happiness."²⁶ Like glory and majesty, **righteousness** is an especially important quality for a king.²⁷
 - Bratcher and Reyburn suggest that for certain languages, a possible substitute may be *he is good to people*. The problem with this rendering, however, is that it connotes favor or generosity, which is not the same thing as **righteousness**. For languages that need to express the idea in a phrase, something like *he does what is right* may be better.
 - The following diagram compares the Hebrew term with the English word **righteousness**. Definitions in the yellow left side apply only to the English word, while definitions in the green right side apply only to the Hebrew word. Definitions in the middle, where the shapes overlap, apply to both the English and Hebrew words:

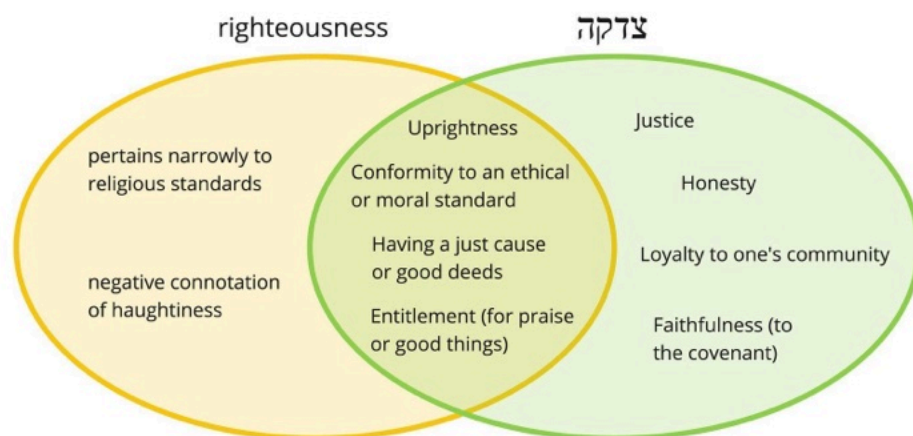
²³ Pss 21:6; 45:4; 96:6//1 Chr 16:27; 104:1; Job 40:10.

²⁴ Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 955.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ SDBH.

²⁷ Pss 72:1-2; 112:3b, 9b.



- The Hebrew word we have rendered **endures** (עֲמִידָה) literally means to *stand*, which is why the REB says *his righteousness stands sure for ever*.
 - In some languages, an abstract noun like **righteousness** cannot perform the action of standing. So, for example, the Hausa CLB says *is certain/confirmed/lasting forever*.²⁸

VERSE 4

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

He has caused his wonderful acts to be *recorded in Scripture and thereby* **remembered**. **YHWH is**, as he said to Moses in the book of Exodus, **merciful and compassionate**, *forgiving our sins and thus sustaining the covenant he made with us.*

זָכַר עֲשֵׂה לְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו מִנּוֹן וְרַחֲמִים יְהוָה:	4	He has caused his wonderful acts to be remembered. YHWH is merciful and compassionate .
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- In Hebrew, the first line of this verse literally says *He made/did a remembrance of his wonders*.
 - The word translated **to be remembered** is actually a noun in Hebrew (זָכַר). Most translations, however, rightly render this as a verbal phrase: *He has caused his wonders to be remembered* (NIV, see also ESV, NLT). We have rendered the word as a verbal idea also.
 - The word **to be remembered** is in a verb form (the *Hiphil*) that is usually translated as causal: **has caused...to be remembered**. However, the sense here is not so much that

²⁸ ya tabbata har abada.

YHWH is *forcing* people to remember²⁹ or giving them *permission* to remember; instead, he is *providing them with the means and opportunity* to remember.

- So, other translation possibilities include the French NBS: *he has fixed the memory of his amazing deeds* (Il a fixé le souvenir de ses actes étonnants) or the French Louis Segond: *he left the memory of his wonders* (Il a laissé la mémoire de ses prodiges; see also NVI, S21).
- Another way to express the idea of **caused...to be remembered** is *he has gained renown* (NRSV; see REB), although this translation does not communicate that YHWH was the one who created the conditions so that the remembrance or renown would happen.
- Languages in which the passive voice is difficult may consider rephrasing the line as *He caused opportunities for people to remember his wonderful acts*.
- The *remembrance* which YHWH made is probably the record of his deeds in written Scripture.
- The verb in this line **he has caused** (עָשָׂה) is in the past tense (it is a *qatal* form):
 - Some translations render the verb in the present tense, such as *he causes us* (NLT). This is not preferred.³⁰
 - It is probably best rendered in English as **he has caused** (a *present perfect*, see NIV, ESV) and not *he caused*, since the remembrance of YHWH's wonderful acts continues up to the time of speech. However, many languages lack a present perfect tense. In such cases, the simple past tense is better than the present tense; for example, the Hausa CLB says *he made his wonderful deeds remembered*.³¹
- The NET translation says *he does amazing things that will be remembered*. This rendering has two main issues:
 - While the verb (עָשָׂה) can mean to *do*, the Hebrew form here demands a past tense rendering.
 - The **wonderful acts**/*amazing things* are probably not the object of the verb **to cause**/*to do* (עָשָׂה). This is because the phrase **his wonderful acts** is in a form that means it most likely indicates the thing being remembered,³² not the thing being **caused**/*done*. Instead, the object of the verb **to cause**/*to do* is *remembrance*.
- The combination of the words **merciful** and **compassionate** occurs frequently in the OT, though sometimes the words occur in the opposite order (*compassionate and merciful*). They are almost always a description of YHWH. These two words occur far more often together than they do apart.
 - YHWH's **merciful** and **compassionate** character was the basis for the renewal of the covenant in Exodus 34. Here in Ps 111, then, the reference to these two words probably caused the

²⁹ Against French BDS: *He makes us remember his wonders* (Il fait qu'on se souvienne de ses prodiges). The French NFC *He wants to be remembered for his extraordinary actions* (Il veut que l'on se souvienne de ses actions extraordinaires) may express the sense better.

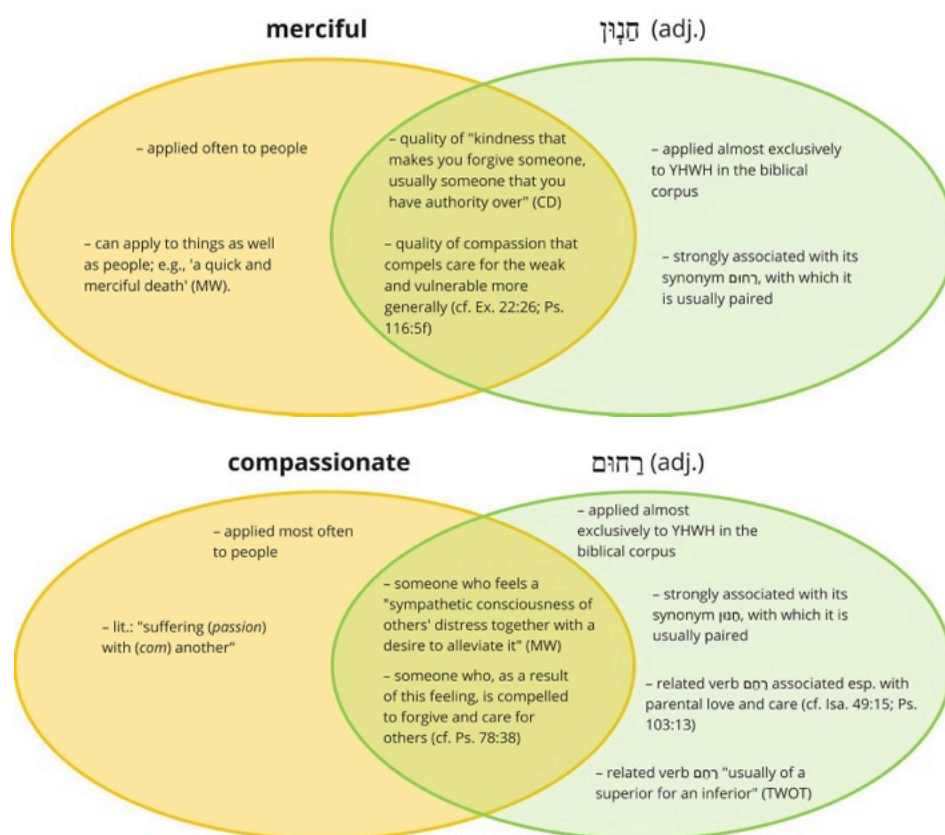
³⁰ This rendering probably relies on the theory that the Hebrew *qatal* form can be understood as *gnomic* or *timeless*, but such a theory is controversial and difficult to support from the evidence.

³¹ Ya sa a tuna da ayyukansa na ban mamaki.

³² It is a *lamed* Prepositional Phrase: see also Jer 31:34, 2 Chr 6:42. So Jenni 2000:129–30.

original audience of this psalm to think about how YHWH sustains and renews the covenant with his people.³³

- The Hebrew adjective we have rendered as **merciful** (חַנּוּן) means a "state in which deities are favorably disposed to someone," or it means when people experience "an emotion of compassion towards other people, and acting accordingly."³⁴ The Hebrew adjective we have rendered as **compassionate** (רַחוּם) means a "state in which deities feel compassion for humans, which is usually translated into action."³⁵
 - When a person is 'merciful,' it denotes that he or she is in authority, and has the power to forgive someone. 'Compassionate' does not carry this sense; instead, the word stresses the person's feeling of sympathy for those who are in distress.
 - The following diagrams compare the English words **merciful** and **compassionate** with the underlying Hebrew terms for each word. In each diagram, definitions in the yellow left side apply only to the English word, while definitions in the green right side apply only to the Hebrew word. Definitions in the middle, where the shapes overlap, apply to both the English and Hebrew words:



³³ Hensley 2018, 107.

³⁴ SDBH.

³⁵ SDBH.

VERSES 5-6

- Whereas all of the clauses in verses 3–4 are focused on the *present* (**is...endures...has caused to be remembered...is**), the clauses in verses 5–6 are focused on YHWH's *past* actions (verses 5a, 6a) and their *future* implications (verse 5b).
- The verb **give** (נתן) is a repeated root in this section, occurring in the first and last line:

- similar verbal semantics: focus on past and future events (reference point movement) - repetition of <i>mn</i>	טָרַף נָתַן לִירָאִיו יִזְכֹּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ:	5	He gave food to those who feared him. He will remember his covenant forever.
	כָּח מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לִתְתּוֹת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם:	6	He showed his people the power of his deeds by giving them nations as an inheritance.

YHWH gave his people food (verse 5a), and he gave his people the promised land (verse 6b); and these generous acts demonstrate his covenant faithfulness (verse 5b) and his power (verse 6a).

VERSE 5

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

When he brought our ancestors out of Egypt, **He gave food**—manna and quail—to **those who feared him**. The reason why he brought them out of Egypt and provided food for them is because of the covenant he had made with our father Abraham, to whose offspring he had promised to give the land of Canaan. And just as he remembered his covenant then, so **He will remember his covenant forever** and he will keep his promises to us.

טָרַף נָתַן לִירָאִיו יִזְכֹּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ:	5	He gave food to those who feared him. He will remember his covenant forever.
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- This psalm contains many references to events from the Exodus-Conquest story (see the notes on verses 6 and 9ab). So, the giving of food in verse 5 probably refers to the time when YHWH fed his people with manna and quail in the wilderness.³⁶
 - So, although the noun used here for **food** (טָרַף) sometimes refers to a *prey*, here it probably refers more generally to food. Therefore, the KJV rendering *meat* is not preferred, since the manna in the wilderness was not animal meat.
- Several modern translations render the word **gave** (נתן) with a present/timeless verb: *he gives/provides food*.³⁷ However, grammatically speaking, the Hebrew verb form used here is more

³⁶ Exod 16; Num 11; cf. Pss 78:23–25; 105:40.

³⁷ NLT, NET, NIV, ESV, CEV, GNT; also German translations LUT and ZÜR.

likely past perfective: **he gave**.³⁸ Rendering the verb in the present tense obscures the likely reference to the Exodus story in this verse, so it is not recommended.

- The Hebrew word we have translated **those who feared** is from the root *to fear* (יָרָא). The Hebrew word *to fear* means not just being afraid, but also includes being *in awe of* and *having reverence for*. So, the GNB renders the word *those who honour him*. The same Hebrew root also occurs in verses 9 and 10. See the diagram below for a comparison of the English and Hebrew terms:



- The phrase **he will remember his covenant forever** has some important features:
 - While *remembering the covenant* is not the same thing as acting upon the covenant, the fact that YHWH will remember his covenant forever means that his people can trust that at some point in time, he will act upon it.
 - The verb *remember* means the "process in which information that is stored in one's mind regarding someone or something is being reprocessed continually and/or repeatedly."³⁹ The use of the word here does not mean that God had forgotten the covenant and needed to be reminded of it. Rather, the opposite is true: God has never forgotten, and he will not forget. So, the NRSV says *he is ever mindful* and the NET has *he always remembers*.
 - The past-tense clause in verse 6a (**he gave**) is followed by a future-tense clause in verse 6b: **he will remember his covenant forever** (see NASB).⁴⁰ Alternatively, it might be that the second line (verse 6b) is in some sense subordinate to the first (verse 6a), which would result in rendering the verbs in this verse as: *he gave food... remembering his covenant...*
 - So, it is also possible to render the verb **he will remember** as a simple present tense verb, as most English translations do (*he remembers*, ESV, NIV, CSB).
 - The verb **he will remember** is from the same root as the Hebrew noun *remembrance* in verse 4a.
 - The **covenant** referred to here is probably the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁴¹

³⁸ This is how the LXX understood it here. See also the German translations EÜ and NGÜ.

³⁹ SDBH.

⁴⁰ The verb in the second line, *he will remember*, is in the Hebrew *yiqtol* form.

⁴¹ See Ps 105:8–11.

- A covenant is "a solemn agreement between two or more parties (persons, groups, nations, deities) with stipulations, blessings, and curses."⁴² This key term appears throughout the Bible, and translators should be consistent in the way they render it. The Hausa CSB renders it with the word for *agreement*.⁴³
- The provision of food in the wilderness (verse 6a) was one historical expression of YHWH's covenant remembrance.

VERSE 6

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

After rescuing his people from Egypt and sustaining them in the wilderness, he continued to do wonderful deeds for his people which demonstrated his power in an even greater way: **He showed his people the power of his deeds by keeping his promise to Abraham and giving them nations as an inheritance.**

כַּח מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר לָקַח וְחָלַת גּוֹיִם:	6	He showed his people the power of his deeds by giving them nations as an inheritance .
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- The Hebrew word we have rendered **he showed** (הִגִּיד) normally refers to spoken communication, which is why the NET renders it *he announced*.⁴⁴ However, here it probably refers to a non-verbal demonstration, and so **he showed** is the preferred rendering.⁴⁵ This is also the rendering found in most English translations. For a detailed discussion of our reasoning, see [The Syntax and Meaning of Ps. 111:6](#).
- The phrase **the power of his deeds** means *the power that characterizes his deeds or the power that is the source of his deeds*. In some languages, it may be necessary to make this meaning clear. Possible renderings also might be *how powerful his deeds are* or *that his deeds are powerful*.
 - In some languages, the word **deeds** may need to be expressed as a verbal idea, such as *what he does* or *what he did*.
- We have translated the opening phrase of the second line as **by giving**, because the second line specifies the *way in*, or means by, which YHWH demonstrated the strength of his works: “by giving them nations as an inheritance”.
 - Though our English translation of the verb **giving** may seem as though the underlying Hebrew verb is a *participle*, the Hebrew form is called the *infinitive construct*, which here expresses the way something happens. Other languages have their own methods for specifying the way something happens. For example, in Hausa, the construction combines the phrase for *through* or *by* with the shortened verbal root.⁴⁶

⁴² SDBH.

⁴³ *yarjejeniya*.

⁴⁴ The REB similarly says *he has declared*.

⁴⁵ In late Biblical Hebrew, the word came to refer to non-verbal communication: Ez 2:96, Neh 1:61.

⁴⁶ *ta wurin ba su gādon al'ummai*.

- The NET renders the phrase as simply **giving**, so that the second line specifies the *content* of the announcement. However, since the verb of verse 6 most likely refers to non-verbal communication, it is unlikely that the second line provides the content of an announcement.
- The pronoun **them** in the second line of the verse refers to **his people** in the first line.
- The phrase we have rendered **nations as an inheritance** literally means *inheritance of nations* (נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם).
 - The word **inheritance** refers to the custom of receiving property through the division of an estate when a father dies. The Biblical authors used this custom as a figure of speech "for the division of the promised land among the descendants of Israel/Jacob."⁴⁷ The figure of speech relies on YHWH's role as father of his people (see Deut 32:6; Exod 4:22ff; Isa 64:7; Jer 3:4, 31:9; Hos 11:1). However, the metaphor should not be pressed too far to mean that it implies that YHWH dies so that his people can receive their inheritance. Although a normal inheritance has the meaning that the father dies, when the word is used as a metaphor for the portion that the Israelites would receive, the Bible never suggests the death of YHWH. Translators should therefore be careful to ensure that their rendering of this word does not necessitate or emphasize a death.
 - The **inheritance** in this phrase refers to land. Several English translations make this clear by rendering the phrase as *the lands of other nations* (NIV, NLT; see also NET, GNB: *the lands of foreigners*). A benefit of rendering the word 'inheritance' as *lands* is that it avoids the difficulties that some cultures may have with YHWH giving an inheritance to people.
 - Some languages may require a verbal phrase to communicate the meaning, such as giving *them the nations to inherit them*.
 - The word **nations** here refers to the foreign nations that were neighbors of the people of God.

VERSES 7-8

- The third subsection is the most clearly defined. This subsection is formed by:
 - repetition of the Hebrew root that means **faithful/faithfulness/enduring** (אָמַן) in verses 7a, 7b, 8b
 - repetition of passive participles (**enduring**, **established**, and **practiced**) in verses 7b, 8a, 8b
 - the fact that **all his commandments** is the subject in three of the four lines (verses 7b, 8a, 8b)
 - the subsection is framed, like verses 3–4, by pairs of words: **faithful and just** (verse 7a) and **faithfulness and uprightness** (verse 8b).
 - The subsection looks like this:

⁴⁷ TDOT.

• similar syntax (passive participles) and elision • root אמן	7	מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט נֶאֱמָרִים כָּל-פְּקוּדָיו:	The deeds of his hands are faithful and just. All his commandments are enduring ,
	8	סְמוּכִים לְעֵד לְעוֹלָם עֲשׂוּיִם בְּאֱמֶת וּבְיָשָׁר:	<i>established</i> forever and ever, <i>practiced</i> in faithfulness and uprightness.

VERSE 7

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

The deeds of his hands are faithful and just, including his act of giving us the law. All his commandments are enduring,

מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט נֶאֱמָרִים כָּל-פְּקוּדָיו:	7	The deeds of his hands are faithful and just . All his commandments are enduring ,
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- The phrase **the deeds of his hands** means *the things that his hands have done* or *the things he did with his hands*. In Scripture, YHWH does not have physical hands; rather, YHWH's hands are an image that generally represents his power, including his power to create, to protect his people or to win in battle. The references to the provision of food in the desert in verse 5 and to the conquest in verse 6 suggest that the deeds in verse 7 include providing for his people and fighting for them in battle.
 - In languages "where it is possible to keep the imagery of God's hands, it should be done."⁴⁸
 - In languages that require a verbal idea, a rendering like *the actions that his hands have done* or *what he has done with his hands* may be appropriate.
 - For languages that cannot express that God has **hands**, an alternative might be to follow the GNB: *In all he does is faithful and just*⁴⁹ or the French PDV: *He always acts with truth and justice*.⁵⁰
- The words translated **faithful** and **just** are actually nouns in Hebrew: *faithfulness* and *justice* (see the note on **glorious** and **majestic** in verse 3a).
 - The word **faithful** (אֱמֶת) refers to a "state in which humans and deities are considered worthy of trust, because they are truthful and committed, with an unwavering disposition, which is reflected in their words and actions."⁵¹
 - The following diagram shows the similarities and differences between the English word *faithfulness* and the Hebrew word. Definitions in the left yellow part apply only to the English word, and definitions in the right green part apply only to the Hebrew word.

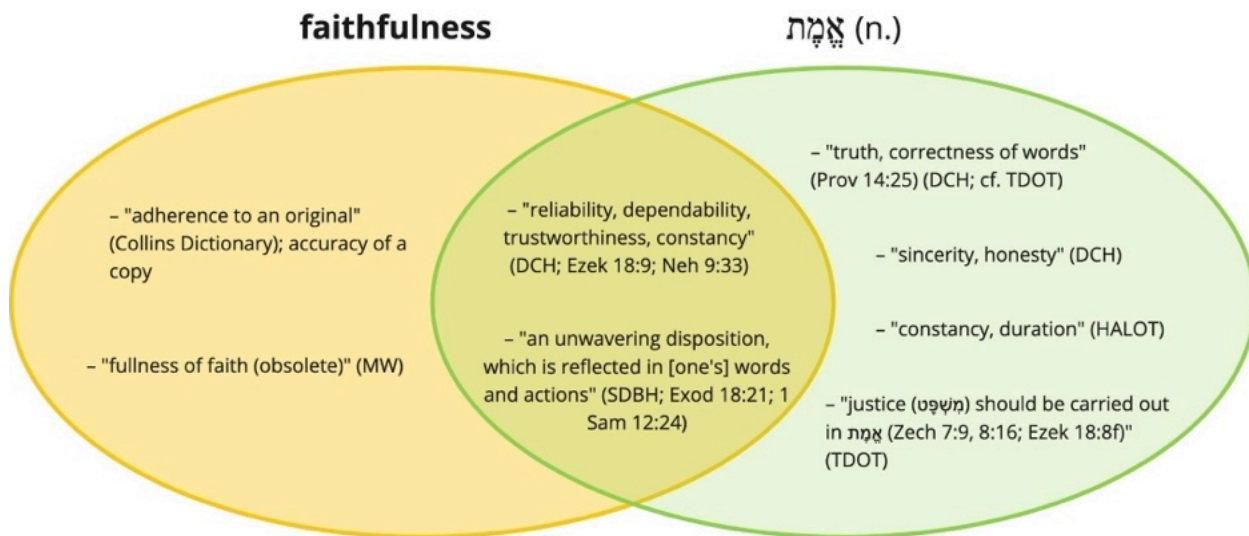
⁴⁸ Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 189.

⁴⁹ Close to this are the NLT (*all he does is just and good*) and the French BDS (*Tout ce qu'il fait témoigne qu'il est fidèle et juste*).

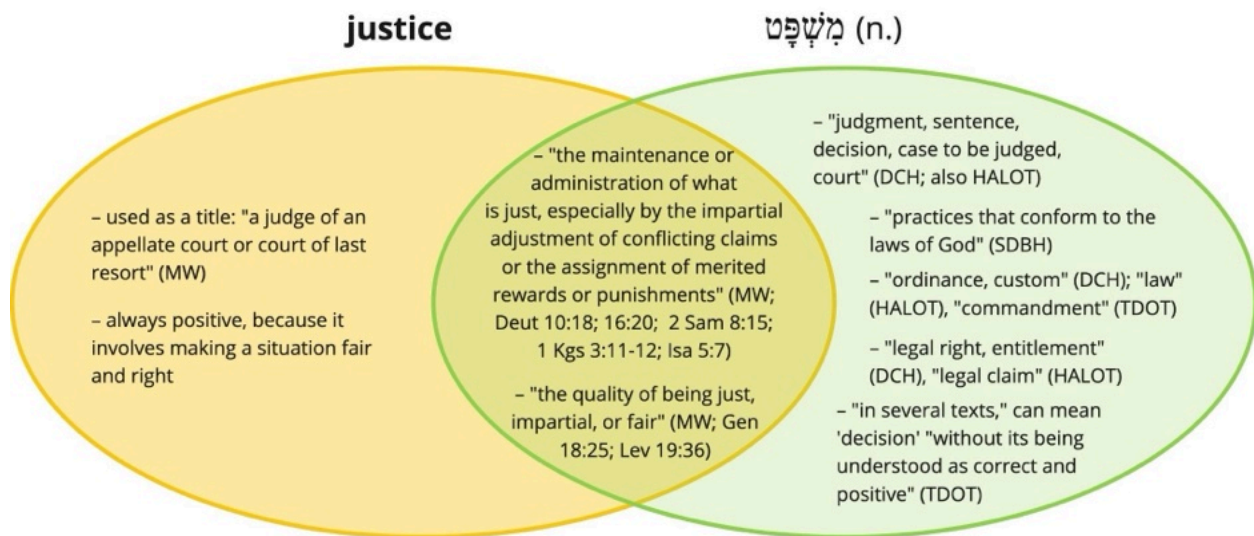
⁵⁰ *Il agit toujours avec vérité et justice*.

⁵¹ SDBH.

Definitions in the middle, where the colors overlap, apply to both the English and Hebrew words:



- The Hebrew word we have rendered **just** (מִשְׁפָּט) often refers to *judgment* or *rules*, but here it refers to *justice*, since it is coupled with the abstract word **faithful** (see NET, NIV, ESV, GNT). The word primarily describes "practices that conform to the laws of God."⁵² These practices are therefore "impartial, fair" and show "conformity to truth, fact, or reason."⁵³
- The following diagram shows the similarities and differences between the English word *justice* and the Hebrew word. Definitions in the left yellow part apply only to the English word, and definitions in the right green part apply only to the Hebrew word. Definitions in the middle, where the colors overlap, apply to both the English and Hebrew words:



⁵² SDBH.

⁵³ Merriam-Websters.

- **Commandments** (פְּקֻדִּים) are "rules regulating behavior."⁵⁴
 - The pairing of the lines in verse 7 suggests that YHWH's **commandments** (verse 7b) are also included among **the deeds of his hands** (v. 7a).
 - The **commandments** occur at the center of the *chiasm* that spans verses 3–10 (see [Prominence Feature 1: Eternal Commands](#) for an explanation).
 - By placing the **commandments** at the center of the *chiasm* and making them the subject of three consecutive verses (verses 7b–8b), the commandments receive special prominence within the psalm. Furthermore, the commandments are surrounded by the threefold repetition of the Hebrew root that means *faithful/faithfulness* (אָמֵן). YHWH's commands are both given (by him) in faithfulness and they are to be done (by his people) in faithfulness.
- The word we have rendered as **enduring** has as its basic meaning "to be firm, trustworthy, safe."⁵⁵ English translations render it *trustworthy* (ESV, NIV, NLT, CSB, REB, NRSV), *reliable* (LEB, NET), or *dependable* (GNB). However, the word can also mean enduring in the Hebrew form of the word found here, and this word is most likely in parallel with verse 8a, which is clearly about a long duration of time.⁵⁶ So, we prefer the rendering **enduring**.
 - Some languages may not be able to use these kinds of adjectives to describe a concept like YHWH's commandments. For example, the Hausa CSB renders it *a thing of support/leaning*, in other words, *a reliable/dependable thing*.⁵⁷

VERSE 8

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

established by YHWH to last **forever and ever**, and so they are **practiced** even to this day by his people **in faithfulness and uprightness**. And so, while we wait for YHWH to remember his covenant and perform great deeds once again, we too must remember to keep the covenant requirements YHWH has given us.

סְמוּכִים לְעַד לְעוֹלָם עֲשׂוּיִם בְּאֵמֶת וְיֶשֶׁר	8	established forever and ever, practiced in faithfulness and uprightness .
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- This verse is not its own separate sentence, but rather continues the thought that began in verse 7b. Verse 8 explains why 'All his commandments are enduring': it is *because* they are **established** forever and ever, and *therefore* they are 'practiced in faithfulness and uprightness' by YHWH's people. Translators may need to make the logical connections represented by the words *because* and *so* clear in the local language.

⁵⁴ SDBH.

⁵⁵ HALOT; cf. DCH, SDBH.

⁵⁶ This parallel comes from the *chiasm* described in [Prominence Feature 2: Great Deeds](#).

⁵⁷ *abin dogara ne*.

- For languages that lack the passive voice, translators may consider adding a subject and object to each of the clauses in this verse, and rendering the verb in the active voice: *he established them forever and ever, his people practice them in faithfulness and uprightness.*
- The Hebrew word we have rendered as **established** has *lean*⁵⁸ in the sense of *support* or *sustain* as its basic meaning.⁵⁹
 - This explains the wide variety of English translations of the word: *(are) established* (ESV, CSB, NRSV, NIV), *are upheld* (NASB), *are steadfast* (NIV84), *are...true* (NLT), *they last* (GNB), *are sustained* (LEB), *are...firm* (NET).
 - The Hausa CLB renders it *are certain* from a root that means *confirmed*.⁶⁰
- The interpretation of verse 8b is difficult. The main question is whether the word we have translated **practiced** (עָשׂוּם) means *practiced (by people)* or *enacted (by YHWH)*. In short, the word **practiced** comes from the root עָשָׂה which means *to do*, and what is being done is the commandments from verse 7. *To do* (עָשָׂה) a command in the Bible usually means to obey it or practice it, not to enact it.⁶¹ So, the phrase here means *practiced (by people)*. This is the meaning found in the ESV, NASB, NLT, NET, and NRSV.⁶²
 - Translators may find that they need to include the adverbial phrase *by people* in order to make this meaning clear.
 - For a detailed discussion, see [The Text, Grammar, and Meaning of Ps. 111:8b](#).
- The prepositional phrase **in faithfulness and uprightness** refers to the manner in which people practice YHWH's commandments. It is not enough for people to simply practice the commandments; they must do so with the proper attitude and sincerity. This is similar to the psalmist's call in verse 1 to praise YHWH 'whole-heartedly.'
 - The word **faithfulness** is the same Hebrew word we translated as **faithful** in verse 7a. Here it functions as a noun, while in verse 7a it is best to translate it in English as an adjective. Translators should consider using words in the local language that share the same root to render these words in both verses.
 - The word **uprightness** is the same root word as **upright people** in verse 1. Here also, translators should attempt to use words that share the same root in the local language in both verses.

⁵⁸ DCH.

⁵⁹ HALOT.

⁶⁰ *tabbatattu ne*.

⁶¹ Ps 103:18 (פָּקְדוֹתָי לְעֹשִׂיָם); see also Lev 22:31 (מִצְוֹת); Deut 4:1 (חֻשְׁפִּטִּים...חֻקִּים); Josh 22:5 (מִצְוָה...תּוֹרָה); Ps 119:112 (חֻקִּים).

⁶² Translations that render it according to the meaning *enacted (by YHWH)* are CSB and NIV (see also French BDS: *fondées*. GNB, REB, KJV, NIV84, REB say *done*, which carries the same sense (see also French NBS, TOB, LSG, NVS, S21).

VERSES 9-10

- The fourth subsection of verses 3–10, which is verses 9–10, is united by:
 - being the only pair of verses in the psalm that contains 3 lines each in each verse.
 - the repetition of the root *fear* (ירא) at the end of verse 9 and the beginning of verse 10.

• similar line structure: tricola • root ירא	פְּדוּתָּהּ שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ צִוְּהָ לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ קְדוֹשׁ וְנִרְאָה שְׁמוֹ:	9	He sent redemption to his people. He commanded his covenant forever. His name is holy and <i>awesome</i> .
	יִרְאֵתָהּ חֲכָמָה יִרְאֵתָהּ שְׂכָל טוֹב לְכָל־עֹשֶׂיהֶם אֲתֵהֱלֹתָ עַמְּדָת לְעַד:	10	<i>Fearing</i> YHWH is the beginning of wisdom; all who practice them have good insight. His praiseworthiness endures forever.

- The theme of this subsection is how YHWH's people ought to respond to his great deeds.
 - This theme was anticipated by the last line of the previous section, which talks about how the people **practiced** his commandments in **faithfulness** and **uprightness**.
 - Verse 9 details how YHWH redeemed his people and gave them his commandments, so that his name is awesome, that is, feared. This implies that YHWH's people should fear him because of what he has done.
 - Verse 10 explains what it means to respond to YHWH in fear (verse 10a), to obey his commandments (verse 10b), and the praiseworthiness (verse 10c) of YHWH implies a call to praise him.

VERSE 9

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

*When our ancestors were slaves in Egypt, **He sent redemption to his people.** He brought us out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai, where **He gave us the law and commanded that his covenant** requirements be observed **forever.** **His name is holy and awesome,** which means that his people must be holy and must fear him.*

פְּדוּתָּהּ שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ צִוְּהָ לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ קְדוֹשׁ וְנִרְאָה שְׁמוֹ:	9	He sent redemption to his people. He commanded his covenant forever. His name is holy and awesome .
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- The word **redemption** (פְּדוּתָּהּ) means a "causative action by which deities help humans out of a dangerous, life-threatening, or otherwise difficult situation."⁶³ The word evokes the Exodus story

⁶³ SDBH.

and the redemption from Egypt. According to the Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database, the word "means '(action or power of) redemption' and always refers to divine activity... Its main connotations, in addition to liberation, are powerful action and the context of an exclusive relationship."⁶⁴

- The idea of sending **redemption** may not make sense in some languages, and translators should use proper local syntax to express the meaning here. Some examples of possible translations are *he provided redemption* (NIV), *he has granted deliverance* (French BDS),⁶⁵ *he set his people free* (GNB, French PDV), *he delivered his people* (NET), *God gave freedom to his people* (Spanish DHH).⁶⁶
 - Some translations take this to refer to payment of a ransom (NLT, Spanish NVI). However, the Hebrew word here does not necessarily include a payment.⁶⁷
- After YHWH redeemed his people from Egypt, he commanded his **covenant**. Thus, the first two lines of this verse reflect the progression of the story told in Exodus. The idea of *commanding a covenant* probably refers to *commanding that a covenant be kept*. The NET translation captures this sense well: *he ordained that his covenant be observed*.⁶⁸ The Hausa CSB says *he established his agreement*.⁶⁹
- The key term **holy** is commonly misunderstood to mean the opposite of *unrighteous/evil*. However, it actually refers to the opposite of *common/everyday*.
 - The word does not strictly mean "righteous, but simply set apart, different, distinct. In the Bible this is one of the primary attributes of God...he is set apart from all other[s]; he is unique. There is no one like him in heaven and on earth."⁷⁰ This also means that "He cannot be associated with anything that is in any way profane or tainted by sin or other impurities."⁷¹
 - Thus, the word **holy** functions as a cover term for the wonderful uniqueness of God in all of his attributes: "God is eternal, and no one else is...God is omniscient, and no one else is. God is righteous, and while we may have moments of righteousness, we are not like him—he is different. God is all powerful, and we are not."⁷²
- The word we have translated as **awesome** (נִרְאָה) comes from a root (יִרָא) that is often translated as *to fear*. However, this word in Hebrew means more than inspiring fear, and so causing people to be afraid should not be the primary sense conveyed in translations of this word. It also refers to

⁶⁴ SAHD.

⁶⁵ *Il a accordé la délivrance à son peuple.*

⁶⁶ *Dio libertad a su pueblo.*

⁶⁷ SDBH: it is the "causative action by which deities help humans out of a dangerous, life-threatening, or otherwise difficult situation."

⁶⁸ On the meaning of the phrase *commanded a covenant* (צוה ברית), see Josh. 7:11; 23:16, and compare the phrases *commanded Torah* (צוה תורה) in Lev 7:37-38 and *commanded a way* (צוה דרך) in Exod 32:8 and Deut 9:12.

⁶⁹ *ya kafa yarjejeniyarsa.*

⁷⁰ Ross 2011, 532 n. 26. When the word refers to people or things, it means they are devoted to the realm of the divine.

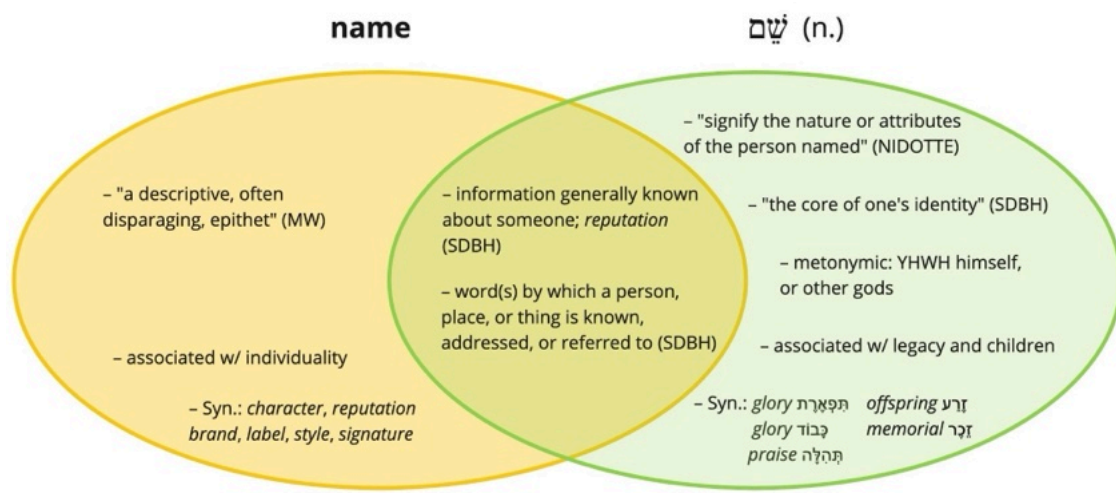
⁷¹ SDBH.

⁷² Ibid.

inspiring reverence, awe, and respect. The following diagram compares the English word *fear* with the Hebrew root:



- In the next verse, the psalmist speaks of **fearing** YHWH. The word **fearing** in that phrase shares the same Hebrew root as the word **awesome** here in verse 9. Thus, an emotion evokes an action: YHWH is awesome, and that inspires his people to fear him, to be in awe of him, to respect him, and revere him. Translators should seek to render both the terms **awesome** and **fearing** with words that capture the full sense of the underlying Hebrew word. Translators are also encouraged to use the same root word in the local language to translate both words, if doing so can capture the sense of *awe*, *reverence*, and *respect* in both cases.
- In ancient Hebrew culture, a **name** signified someone's character, attributes, and identity. This meaning is quite different from the understanding of the English word 'name' as it is used in Western cultures today. The following diagram compares the English word **name** with the Hebrew word (*shem*: שֵׁם):



VERSE 10

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

And we should fear YHWH, not only because he is to be feared, but because **Fearing YHWH** and keeping his commandments **is the beginning of wisdom**; all who practice them, that is, his commandments, **have good insight**. Just as his righteousness and covenant faithfulness endure forever, so too **His praiseworthiness endures forever** which is why I praise him in the congregation today, even as I wait for him to perform great deeds once again.

רִאשִׁית חֵכְמָה יִרְאֵת יְהוָה שְׂכֵל טוֹב לְכָל-עֹשֵׂיהֶם תְּהִלָּתוֹ עֲמֻדָּה לְעֵד:	10	Fearing YHWH is the beginning of wisdom ; all who practice them have good insight . His praiseworthiness endures forever.
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- For important detail and guidance on translating the word **fearing**, see the notes on the word **awesome** in verse 9. Practically speaking, **fearing YHWH** (verse 10a) means obeying YHWH's commandments (verse 10b).
 - Some languages may require the concept of **fearing** to have an explicit subject. One possible rendering of the line in such cases is *when people fear YHWH, it is the beginning of wisdom*.
 - Furthermore, in some languages, the idea of **the beginning of wisdom** may need to be expressed as a verbal idea, such as *When people fear YHWH, they begin to be wise* or *People who respect the Lord are beginning to be wise people*.⁷³
- The word **them** in verse 10b has been a source of confusion, because it is not immediately clear what the word refers to.
 - In short, the pronoun probably refers to the **commandments** in verse 7b. Although **commandments** in verse 7b is rather far from the suffix **them** in verse 10b, there are good reasons why they should be considered the subject:
 - The **commandments** are very prominent within this psalm (see [Prominence Feature 1: Eternal Commands](#) for more detail).
 - In translation, it may be helpful to make the reference clear by replacing the pronoun **them** with the word that the translators used for **commandments** in verse 7b. English translations that do this include the NASB, NLT, GNB, NIV, NET, and CSB.
- The word we have rendered **practice** comes from the Hebrew root (עָשָׂה) that appears the most frequently in this psalm. Its most basic meaning is to *do*. See [Prominence Feature 2: Great Deeds](#) for more information. Just as YHWH has done wonderful deeds, so too his people should respond with good deeds of their own.
 - We have chosen the word 'practice' because it connotes intentional and regular activity, which is fitting for the way that YHWH expects his commandments to be performed. The

⁷³ Bratcher and Reyburn suggest similar solutions, but they do so using the singular "a person." We suggest using the plural to match "all who practice them" in the next line. Bratcher and Reyburn 2010, 957.

verb to do, by contrast, could mean actions that are unintentional or performed only on occasion.

- While the Hebrew phrase we have translated as **good insight** (שִׂכְל טוֹב) can refer to either **insight** (see Prov 13:15) or *success* (see Prov 3:4), both ancient and modern translations generally agree that the phrase here in Ps 111:10 means **good insight**. Many English translations rightly render the phrase as *good understanding* (ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV).
 - The phrase does not merely refer to raw intelligence or understanding that could be used for selfish or evil purposes. The insight involves good discernment and good moral judgment.⁷⁴ A translation that makes this clear is the NET: *good moral insight*.
- Most English translations render the word **praiseworthiness** (תְּהִלָּה) in verse 10 as *praise* (KJV, ESV, NLT, NIV, NET). But such a rendering results in the awkward English phrase *his praise endures forever*, which even for native English speakers does not communicate the intended meaning that *the praise given to YHWH by people endures forever* or that *YHWH deserves to be praised by people forever*.
 - **Praiseworthiness** is the preferred gloss of this word here, in which it means a "state in which humans or deities are considered worthy of praise."⁷⁵ This is the sense of the word in Psalms 35:28; 79:3; 102:22; 106:2.
 - This interpretation of the word makes the best sense in the context: YHWH will be forever worthy of praise and, therefore, his people should never cease to praise him.
 - Languages that require a verbal idea for the concept of **praiseworthiness** could render the phrase something like *He is worthy to be praised forever* or *He is to be praised forever* (GNB). Other solutions in translation include *To him belongs eternal praise* (NIV), *Praise will be his forever* (REB), and *He will receive praise forever* (NET).
- Just as YHWH's 'righteousness' **endures** forever in verse 3, so too his 'praiseworthiness' **endures** forever here in verse 10.
 - Translators should use the same word for **endures** here in verse 10 that they used in verse 3. See the notes for verse 3 for more information about this word.

⁷⁴ HALOT.

⁷⁵ SDBH.

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