

EXEGETICAL PAPER FOR PSALM 11

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by  
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Part 1: Translation

Verse	Hebrew	English
1	<p>לְמַנְצֵחַ לְדָוִד  בְּיהוָה חֲסִיתִי  אֵיךְ תֹּאמְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי  נָדְדוּ הַרְבֵּם צְפוּרָה:</p>	<p>To the director of music. Of David.  In YHWH I take refuge.  How can you say to my soul,  “Flee like a bird to a mountain!”</p>
2	<p>כִּי הִנֵּה הַרְשָׁעִים יִדְרֹכּוּן קֶשֶׁת  בּוֹנְנָו חֶצֶם עַל־יֵתֶר  לִירוֹת בְּמוֹ-אֶפֶל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>For behold, the wicked bend the bow;  they fitted their arrow on the string  to shoot in the darkness to the upright in heart.</p>
3	<p>כִּי הִשְׁתּוֹת יִהְרָסוּן  צְדִיק מִה־פֶּעַל:</p>	<p>If the foundations are destroyed,  what can the righteous do?”</p>
4	<p>יְהוָה בְּהֵיכַל קֹדֶשׁוֹ  יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם כְּסֵאוֹ  עֵינָיו יַחֲזוּ עַפְעַפְיוֹ יִבְחֲנוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם:</p>	<p>YHWH is in His holy temple;  YHWH’s throne is in the heaven;  His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of men.</p>
5	<p>יְהוָה צְדִיק יִבְחֵן וְרָשָׁע  וְאֹהֵב חֶמֶס שִׂנְאָה נַפְשׁוֹ:</p>	<p>YHWH tests the righteous, but his soul hates the  wicked and the one who loves violence.</p>
6	<p>יִמְטֵר עַל־רְשָׁעִים פְּחִים  אֵשׁ וְגִפְרִית וְרוּחַ זֹלַעְפוֹת מִנֵּת  כּוֹסִם:</p>	<p>He will rain coals on the wicked;  fire and brimstones and burning wind shall be the  portion of their cup.</p>
7	<p>כִּי־צְדִיק יְהוָה  צְדָקוֹת אֹהֵב  יִשְׂרָאֵל יַחֲזוּ פָנָיו:</p>	<p>For YHWH is righteous,  He loves righteousness.  The upright will see His face.</p>

## Part 2: Parallelism and Structure

English Translation	Exegetical Outline
<sup>1</sup> To the director of music. Of David. In YHWH I take refuge. How can you say to my soul, (metonymical) “Flee like a bird to a mountain! (formal)	<b>I. The psalmist holds fast to his trust in YHWH when tempted by his counselors to flee due to the imminent attack from the wicked (1-3)</b>
<sup>2</sup> For behold, the wicked bend the bow; they fitted their arrow on the string (explanatory) to shoot in the darkness to the upright in heart. (consequential)	
<sup>3</sup> If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (complementary)	
<sup>4</sup> YHWH is in His holy temple; YHWH’s throne is in the heaven; (explanatory) His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of men. (explanatory)	<b>II. The reasons the palmist holds fast to his trust in YHWH are YHWH is sovereign and righteous therefore will judge the wicked and bless the righteous (4-7)</b>
<sup>5</sup> YHWH tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. (contrastive)	
<sup>6</sup> He will rain coals on the wicked; fire and brimstones and burning wind shall be the portion of their cup. (complementary)	
<sup>7</sup> For YHWH is righteous, He loves righteousness. (complementary) The upright will see His face. (consequential)	

**Big Idea: The psalmist holds fast to his trust in YHWH when tempted by his counselors to flee due to the imminent attack from the wicked (1-3) because YHWH is sovereign and righteous therefore will judge the wicked and bless the righteous (4-7).**

**The psalmist holds fast to his trust in YHWH when tempted by his counselors to flee due to the imminent attack from the wicked (1-3):** The stanza is the psalmist's response to his counselors with the quote of the counselors. Both stanzas begin with YHWH and end with a causal clause that starts with the conjunction **כִּי**. The two **כִּי** conjunctions hold vv. 2 and 3 together.

**The reasons the palmist holds fast to his trust in YHWH are YHWH is sovereign and righteous therefore will judge the wicked and bless the righteous (4-7):** This stanza is the proclamation of the psalmist on the reasons why he holds fast to his trust in YHWH. YHWH is referenced in every verse in vv. 4-7 and mentioned by name four times to emphasize the focus on the characters and works of YHWH. Like the first stanza, this stanza begins with YHWH and ends with a **כִּי** clause.

### Part 3: Commentary

#### I. The psalmist holds fast to his trust in YHWH when tempted by his counselors to flee due to the imminent attack from the wicked (1-3)

11:1

לְמַנְצֵחַ לְדָוִד בַּיהוָה | חֲסִיתִי אֵיךְ תֹּאמְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי נִוְדוּ הַרְכֵם צְפוּרָה:

Translation:

**To the director of music. Of David. In YHWH I take refuge. How can you say to my soul, “flee like a bird to a mountain!”**

Psalm 11 is a psalm of trust<sup>1</sup> because it has no request to YHWH except for a possible jussive in verse 6 (יִמְטֹר). It has a superscription, “To the director of music. Of David.” While the preposition לְ has different functions, usually לְדָוִד means David was the author.<sup>2</sup> The psalmist wrote it to address the speakers of vv.1b to 3, whom I will call the “counselors.”<sup>3</sup> The purpose is to convince the counselors that they should take refuge in YHWH instead of fleeing like a bird to the mountain.

The author started the psalm with “In YHWH” and ended the psalm with “for YHWH” (v. 7). “Take refuge” in YHWH<sup>4</sup> does not mean physically hiding inside the temple in Jerusalem

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<sup>1</sup> It is also called Psalm of confidence or Song of Trust. Some OT scholars categorize it as Psalm of Lament. E.g., Bullock categorized it as Songs of the persecuted and accused, a subcategory of Song of Lament. See Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms*, 133.

<sup>2</sup> Two medieval Masoretic Hebrew MSS and LXX add “a psalm” (מְזִמֹּר). Although 32 superscriptions have לְמַנְצֵחַ מְזִמֹּר, 8 have only לְמַנְצֵחַ; so while MT is difficult, it is not impossible, therefore the MT reading is likely the original. Ps 16 has the לְדָוִד superscription, and Luke attributed David as its author (Acts 2:25-30).

<sup>3</sup> Commentators are divided on the addressees of this psalm. The possibilities are the speakers of vv. 1b to 3 (whom I will call the “counselors”), YHWH, the wicked, the righteous, or the psalmist himself.<sup>3</sup> If it was written to YHWH, the purpose might be to plead to YHWH to punish the wicked. In that case, we should interpret יִמְטֹר in verse 6 as a jussive. If it was written to the wicked, the purpose might be to warn them of the punishment that will come eventually. If it was written to the righteous people, the purpose was to encourage them to take refuge in YHWH when facing attacks from the wicked. Finally, if the psalmist wrote it for himself, the purpose might be to reinforce his trust in YHWH. My view is that the psalmist wrote it to address the counselors because he used the second person plural pronoun (תֹּאמְרוּ) in verse 1.

<sup>4</sup> “In YHWH I take refuge” is a common theme in in Psalms, e.g., Ps. 7:1; 16:1; 25:20; 31:1.

from attacks of the wicked.<sup>5</sup> Instead, it means to trust in YHWH for His protection from danger spiritually.

The psalmist was facing imminent attack from the wicked (v. 2). The psalmist asked a rhetorical question to his counselors, “How can you say to my soul,”<sup>6</sup> And then quoted his counselors, “flee like a bird to your mountain.”<sup>7</sup> The quote starts from v1c and ends in verse 3.<sup>8</sup>

The verb “flee” (נָּוּדָי) means “move to and fro, wander, flutter.”<sup>9</sup> “Flee<sup>10</sup> like a bird to a mountain<sup>11</sup>” is a metaphor. The image is of a bird fleeing to hide from hunters in the mountain. Birds could hide in caves, steep cliffs, inaccessible rocks, bushes, or trees in the Judean mountains.<sup>12</sup> The mountains of Judah, from the earliest to the latest times, have been a place of

<sup>5</sup> Goldingay thinks it is possible a reader of the psalm might be literary talking refuge in the temple referencing Adonijah (1 Kings 1:50), see Goldingay, *Psalms*, 189. But I think David originally intended to mean trusting YHWH spiritually because he referenced YHWH’s throne is in heaven in v. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Soul (נַפְשִׁי) means the whole person, not a particular component of a human being. See Bratcher and Reyburn, *A Handbook on Psalms*, 40.

<sup>7</sup> Your mountain (הַרְרָכֶם) has a masculine plural suffix, probably referring to the psalmist and those who were with him.

<sup>8</sup> Commentators agree the speech of the counselors begins at “flee like a bird.” However, they cannot agree on where the counselor’s speech end. There are three views. The first view is 1c are the only words from the counselors. In this view, verses 2 and 3 are the speech of the psalmist. See Gerstenberger for this view, Gerstenberger, *Psalms. Part 1, 77*. The second view is the counselors’ words include vv. 1c, and 2, but verse 3 is the speech of the palmist. Craigie and Goldingay takes this view, see Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 131. and Goldingay, *Psalms*, 187. The third view is the counselors’ words include vv. 1c to 3. This is my view and the view of the majority of the commentators. Most translations take this view as well (NASB, ESV, NET, CSB, NET). The reasons are first, verses 2 and 3 start with the conjunction וְ. These two verses give the reasons of the counselors to ask the palmist to flee to the mountains. Second, verse 3 shows the speaker did not have the trust to YHWH, which is the opposite of the trust of the palmist’s speech in verse 1.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 626.

<sup>10</sup> Cairo Geniza, many medieval Masoretic MSS, LXX, Aquilla, Syriac Peshitta, Targum have נָּוּדָי (2fs) while BHS has נָּוּדָי (2mp). The LXX reading agrees in number with the addressee, a singular bird (צִפּוֹר) as well as my soul (נַפְשִׁי). The alternate reading is likely the original because of strong external and internal support.

<sup>11</sup> I choose the LXX reading because it is supported by strong external evidence (LXX, Peshitta, Targum) and the LXX reading, כָּמוֹ or הָרִים, explains the rise of the MT reading, הַרְרָכֶם, due to faulty word division.

<sup>12</sup> Goldingay commented traditionally mountains are not a common place for human to hide. He wrote that human beings take refuge in the wilderness, not in the mountain, and referred to David hiding in the Judean wilderness as example (1 Sam. 24; 26). He wrote that mountains are where the danger lies, not security. I think he made a claim that cannot be supported by other Scriptures. E.g. the wilderness is full of mountains (1 Sam 23:25-26) and Jesus told his disciples to flee to the mountains when Jerusalem is attacked by enemies (Juke 21:20). See Goldingay, *Psalms*, 190.

refuge for the persecuted.<sup>13</sup> However, the counselors did not mean to ask the psalmist to literary escape the attacks of the wicked by hiding in the mountain. Instead, they mean using human effort to escape the attacks without trusting YHWH. This is supported by the missing of YHWH in the words of the counselors.

The psalmist could flee to the mountain or continue to trust in YHWH. The psalmist presented that these two options are exclusive to each other. One cannot choose to flee to take refuge in the mountain and to take refuge in YHWH at the same time. “How can you say to my soul” means the psalmist disagreed with his counselors’ advice. He chose to hold on to his trust in YHWH for protection.

## 11:2

כִּי הִנֵּה הַרְשָׁעִים יִדְרֹכּוּן קֶשֶׁת כּוֹנְנִו חֲצָם עַל־יָתֵר לִירוֹת בְּמוֹ-אֶפֶל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל:

Translation:

**For behold, the wicked bend the bow; they fitted their arrow on the string to shoot in the darkness to the upright in heart.**

Verses 2 and 3 continue the quote of the psalmist of his counselors. This verse and the next start with כִּי, indicating two reasons the counselors asked the psalmist to flee like a bird. In this verse, the psalmist introduces two key groups of people in the psalm, the wicked and the righteous. This psalm portrays the different ways of the wicked and the righteous with their distinct destinies.<sup>14</sup>

The first reason was that the wicked were ready to attack the upright with arrows from the dark. “The wicked” (הַרְשָׁעִים) means people that are guilty before God.<sup>15</sup> “They fitted their arrow<sup>16</sup> on the string” and prepared to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart. Flee like a bird,

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<sup>13</sup> Attested by Briggs and Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 89. and *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, 5:162.

<sup>14</sup> Longman, *Psalms*, 90.

<sup>15</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1295.

<sup>16</sup> LXX has a variant of arrows (βέλη = חֲצָים). The MT reading is most likely the original reading because a LXX scribe may intentionally translated it into plural, and the LXX reading is not found in other manuscript.

bend the bow, fitted their arrow to the string, and shoot in the dark are all images of hunting. The psalmist used these vivid images to portray the danger faced by the upright.

הִנֵּה emphasizes the action is happening at the moment. The counselors vividly describe the action of the attacks. He used the perfect tense for fitted (כּוּנְנֵה) to show that the attackers had fitted their arrow on the string, and now they bend the bow. Bend is in imperfect tense (יִדְרֹכֶיךָ),<sup>17</sup> probably used as a progressive imperfect to show that it happened after the fitting of the arrow. The verbs show that the attack is imminent.

They bend the bow to shoot in darkness.<sup>18</sup> Darkness is commonly associated with danger or evil in the Psalms.<sup>19</sup> The counselors mean the wicked, not the upright, were in darkness. It is hard to shoot an arrow in darkness; therefore, this hunter image is a metaphor for attacks from the wicked. The attack could be verbal since arrows can be used for bitter words (Ps 64:3), or the attack could be physical or political.

Because the wicked were in the dark, the upright could not see them and thus were vulnerable to the attack. The wicked did not want others to know their wicked deeds. However, nothing can be hidden from YHWH because He sees all things (v. 4).

Their targets are the heart of the upright. The upright is in the masculine plural. The upright people are also known as the righteous (vv. 3, 5). The noun upright or righteous, when referring to a group of people, shows up four times in this Psalm, arranged in symmetrical order: upright (v. 2), righteous (v. 3), righteous (v. 5), and upright (v. 7).<sup>20</sup> The counselors were saying the wicked were attacking a group of righteous people, which includes the psalmist. These righteous people were upright in their hearts, meaning they not only are righteous externally but there are also righteous internally.

The psalmist was facing two threats. First is the threat from the wicked who wanted to harm the upright in their hearts, including him. The second is the threat from his counselors, who tempted him to flee to the mountains instead of trusting in YHWH.

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<sup>17</sup> יִדְרֹכֶיךָ has a paragogic nun.

<sup>18</sup> A few MSS has יִדְרֹכֶיךָ, “to shoot like the dark”. A scribe may have mistaken כּ with כ. The MT reading is likely the original since it explains the rise of the variant and the variant does not make sense in context.

<sup>19</sup> Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 77.

<sup>20</sup> Schaefer, *Psalms*, 28.

## 11:3

כִּי הִשְׁתּוֹת יִהְרָסוּן צְדִיק מִה־פָּעַל:

Translation:

**If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”**

The counselors' words continue and end in this verse. This verse starts with a כִּי, indicating the second reason the counselors asked the psalmist to flee like a bird. They reasoned if the foundations<sup>21</sup> are destroyed (יִהְרָסוּן)<sup>22</sup>, what can the righteous do?<sup>23</sup>

“The foundations”<sup>24</sup> is a metaphor referring to the foundations of society, meaning law and order of society.<sup>25</sup> צְדִיק is singular and refers to a collective class of people. The counselors meant since the law and order of society have been destroyed, there is nothing the righteous can do to fix the situation. Therefore, the only thing the righteous could do was flee.

The counselors never mentioned YHWH. It contrasts sharply with the speech of the psalmist, who mentioned YHWH in every verse of his speech in this psalm (vv. 1a, 4-7). Therefore, the counselors' words reveal the lack of trust in YHWH in their hearts.

<sup>21</sup> See *The NET Bible*, n. 9. Ps. 82:5 uses another Hebrew word, מוֹסְדֵי, to refer to the same idea, most popular English translations translated it as “foundations” as well.

<sup>22</sup> יִהְרָסוּן has a paragogic nun at the end. LXX reads ἃ κατηρίσω καθεῖλον, “they have pulled down that which you framed,” probably reading הִשְׁתּוֹת יִהְרָסוּן.

<sup>23</sup> This verse can be translated in two other ways. First, grammatically, the verse can be translated as “what has the righteous one done?” In this translate, the counselors were expressing frustration because the righteous ones failed to keep society in good order. Second, it can be translated as “what has the Righteous One done?” This translation is reflected in Midrash Psalms, *Shochar Tov*, “On Righteous One of the World, what deed have You done?”. In this case, the counselors were questioning what YHWH on the destruction of the foundations. However, “what can the righteous do” fit the context better because the counselors were convincing the psalmist to flee. Most English translations (NASB, ESV, CSB, NIV, KJV) translated as the way I did. Segal argued that the psalmist saw all possible meanings. I doubt that was the case. I believe the psalmist only has one meaning in mind. See Segal, *A New Psalm*, 50.

<sup>24</sup> The Hebrew word הִשְׁתּוֹת is a rare word. It is only used one more time in OT, Isa. 19:10, usually translated as “pillars” (NASB, ESV), “Those who are the pillars of Egypt will be crushed.” In here, it means foundations. See Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1666.

<sup>25</sup> Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 133. However if one takes the view that the counselors words ended in verse 2, then the foundations would mean the faith of the psalmist to YHWH. See Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 337.



## II. The reasons the palmist holds fast to his trust in YHWH are YHWH is sovereign and righteous therefore will judge the wicked and bless the righteous (4-7)

11:4

יְהוָה | בְּהֵיכַל קִדְשׁוֹ יְהוָה בְּשָׁמַיִם כְּסֵאוֹ עֵינָיו יַחְזוּ עַפְעָפִיּוֹ יְבַחְנוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם:

Translation:

**YHWH is in His holy temple; YHWH's throne is in the heaven; His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of men.**

This verse begins the second stanza (vv. 4-7). In this stanza, the author explains why He took refuge in YHWH. He begins verses 4 and 5 with YHWH. He proclaims that YHWH is in His holy temple and His throne is in heaven. The adjective holy is a sharp contrast to the evil deeds of the wicked. The psalmist turns the focus from the wicked in the dark to YHWH in heaven. “YHWH’s throne is in heaven” is an explanatory parallel with “YHWH is in His holy temple.” It does not mean YHWH has a physical throne in heaven but is an image that YHWH is sovereign over all things (Ps 115:3).<sup>26</sup>

The wicked thought that by attacking from the darkness, YHWH would not see what they do (Ps 10:11). But the psalmist proclaims that YHWH does see.<sup>27</sup> Darkness does not obscure the eyes<sup>28</sup> of YHWH (Ps 64:2-6). “The eyes of YHWH” does not mean YHWH looks like humans with two physical eyes. It is anthropomorphic language to help the readers picture YHWH is looking from heaven.<sup>29</sup> His eyelids probably refer to the squinting that takes place in focusing closely on an object to make the point that YHWH is paying close attention to what is happening on earth.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Craigie argues that YHWH in His holy temple symbolizes YHWH’s presence among His people. See Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 133. I think “YHWH’s throne is in the heaven” is an explanation parallel with “YHWH is in His holy temple”, symbolizing YHWH’s sovereignty over all things.

<sup>27</sup> LXX reads εἰς τὸν πένητα, “upon the poor”.

<sup>28</sup> YHWH’s eyes, עֵינָיו עַפְעָפִיּוֹ, is a reduplicated noun. It always occurs in the dual.

<sup>29</sup> Anthropomorphisms seek to “humanize” God so that we may better understand what the Lord is like. These indications of physical members show that God is able to do precisely those things that are the functions of man’s physical parts. See Meisinger, “Divine Emotion,” 10.

<sup>30</sup> Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 341.

Since there is no object to the verb “see,” the object of see is the same as the following verb (יִבְחֶנּוּ), which is children of men. יִחַזֵּן appears twice in this Psalm. The second time is at the last verse, where the upright shall יִחַזֵּן the face of YHWH. See (יִחַזֵּן) and test (יִבְחֶנּוּ) are both imperfect, probably used as characteristic present verbs to show YHWH sees and tests the deeds of all people all the time.<sup>31</sup> To assert that YHWH see is to confess YHWH as a relevant, active power in the world.<sup>32</sup>

The intended purpose of YHWH testing someone is to reveal what is in the person's heart. In Jer 6:27, YHWH made Jeremiah a tester to His people so that Jeremiah may know and test their ways. In Ps 17:3, the psalmist wrote that YHWH has “tested” him and found nothing unrighteous. In Job 23:10, Job said YHWH tested him so that his faith would come out as gold. When YHWH tests the righteous, He intends to build them up. As a result, the righteous frequently come out stronger in faith, often described as refined silver or gold (Zech 13:8-9; Ps 66:12). However, when YHWH tests the wicked, He will reveal the wickedness of their hearts and punish them by giving them what they deserve based on that they had done (Jer 9:6-7; 12:3; 17:9-10).

בְּנֵי אָדָם is a reference to all human beings. YHWH tests all human beings, including the wicked, who are hiding in the darkness (v. 2). Although law and order of society have been destroyed, YHWH is still in control. YHWH sees everything in the world, which means YHWH is omniscient.

## 11:5

הִי הָיָה צְדִיק יִבְחֶנּוּ וְרָשָׁע וְאָהָב חֲמָס שִׂנְאָה נַפְשׁוֹ:

Translation:

**YHWH tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.**

In verses 5 and 6, the psalmist describes the implications of YHWH's sovereignty and omniscience. Like the previous verse, this verse starts with YHWH. The previous verse informs us where YHWH is. This verse and the next verse inform us of what YHWH does. What YHWH

<sup>31</sup> The verb test (יִבְחֶנּוּ) could allude to the test of metal with fire, see Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 132.

<sup>32</sup> DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 101.

does to the righteous and the wicked is different. YHWH tests (יִבְחֵן) <sup>33</sup> the righteous<sup>34</sup>, but He hates the wicked.

The psalmist uses “his soul hates,” probably to emphasize the emotion of YHWH toward the wicked.<sup>35</sup> YHWH hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. YHWH does not only hate sins; He hates the people who love to sin (Ps 5:6).<sup>36</sup> The verb “hates” (שָׂנְאָה) is a gnomic perfect, expressing a universal truth of YHWH. Although “hate” often simply means “to love less” (Gen 29:31,33; Mal 1:2-3), it is not the meaning in this psalm because, in verse 6, the punishment to those whom the YHWH hates is very severe. The noun “violence” (חֲמָס) means “strong, fierce, destructive force resulting in acts that main, destroy, kill, often implying lawlessness, terror, and lack of moral restraint.”<sup>37</sup> “His soul hates” means YHWH hates the wicked intensely (2 Sam 5:8). Because YHWH is holy, He hates those who love violence.<sup>38</sup> Next, the psalmist continues to tell what YHWH will do to those He hates.

### 11:6

יִמְטֵר עַל־רִשְׁעִים פְּחִים אֵשׁ וְגַפְרִית וְרוּחַ זֹלַעְפוֹת מִנֶּת כּוֹסִם:

Translation:

**He will rain coals on the wicked; fire and brimstones and burning wind shall be the portion of their cup.**

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<sup>33</sup> LXX and Targum have a textual variant that inverses יִבְחֵן יְצַדִּיק. Some translations (NASB, NRSV) and commentators use the variant as the correct reading and translate this colon as “YHWH tests the righteous and the wicked.” For example, Goldingay adopted the LXX reading, see Goldingay, *Psalms*, 192.

<sup>34</sup> The MT text could also be translated as “YHWH, the Righteous One, test the wicked,” but most English translations and commentators treat יְצַדִּיק as the object of יִבְחֵן.

<sup>35</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 660.

<sup>36</sup> When YHWH is said to “hate” somebody, He would often drive them out of the temple (Hos 9:15) or deliver them to a national (Amos 6:8-14).

<sup>37</sup> Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, art. 2805.

<sup>38</sup> Hakham, *The Bible*, 69.

The psalmist proclaims that YHWH will rain<sup>39</sup> coals (פְּתִימִים)<sup>40</sup> on the wicked. He then adds fire, brimstones, and burning wind<sup>41</sup> would be the portion of their cup. These are metaphors to describe the divine punishment of the wicked because the psalmist uses physical terms to describe spiritual truth throughout this psalm. For example, “YHWH’s throne is in heaven” does not refer to a physical chair but to YHWH’s reign in heaven. Also, “the wicked bend the bow” does not refer to a physical bow but is a metaphor for the fierce attack.

The psalmist did not mention the timing of YHWH’s judgment on the wicked. But he is confident that YHWH will judge justly in the future. When the terms “fire” and “brimstone” occur together, the Scriptures refer to the more immediate judgment in this life (Gen 19:24)<sup>42</sup> and judgment at the end time (Isa 30:33; Ezek 38:22). The psalmist may mean judgment to the wicked will surely come. When YHWH’s judgment comes is up to YHWH alone. Judgment may come in this life, but it will definitely come in the life to come.<sup>43</sup>

The expression מִנְתַּן פּוֹסֵם is a phrase shown five times in the OT (Ps 16:5; 23:5; 75:9; 116:13). Ps 16:5 is closest in meaning to the usage in this psalm. Therefore, the expression should be translated as “the portion of their cup,” meaning the cup of fate.<sup>44</sup> It is a metaphor for what a person would receive, depending on what fills the cup. When a cup is filled with good things (Ps 16:5; 23:5), the person will receive blessings, but when a cup is filled with bad things

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<sup>39</sup> מְטָר could be jussive or imperfect. I interpreted it as imperfect.

<sup>40</sup> All manuscripts have פְּתִימִים, which means traps except the Symmachus has ἄνθρακας, the Hebrew word would be פְּתִימִי, meaning coals of [fire]. A scribe probably committed a transposition error, inverting ם and ך. I have chosen the Symmachus reading as with most English translations because “coals of fire” matches the context more than traps.

<sup>41</sup> The burning wind could refer to the scorching wind from the deserts that blow over the promised land. It is called *hamsin* (Arabic) or *sharab* (modern Hebrew). See Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 134.

<sup>42</sup> A similar judgment was sent to the Egyptians (Ex 9:23).

<sup>43</sup> It was not the psalmist’s focus to discuss the timing the divine judgment. For that, we will need to look at the canon for the Scripture to draw conclusion on when YHWH will judge the wicked. Because YHWH is righteous, He will surely judge the wicked. Sometimes the judgments happen immediately (Lev 10:1-12; 2 Chr 21:18-19; Acts 12:23), sometimes it is delayed (Gen 6:17; 1 Sam 24:12-15; Ps 7:8-9; Isa 11:4); but definitely in the life to come (Matt 13:39; Matt 25:31-33; 2 Thess 1:6-7; Rev 19:11).

<sup>44</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 466.

(Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17), the person will receive discipline or punishment. Therefore, the cup refers to the destiny of a person.<sup>45</sup>

The psalmist's view of YHWH's character and actions set him apart from his counselors. His counselors think the wicked has already won. Therefore, they did not trust that YHWH would react to the violence of the wicked. In contrast, the psalmist trust YHWH will act justly to judge the wicked.<sup>46</sup>

This psalm started with the wicked wanting to attack the righteous from the dark. But it ends with the wicked will one day receive punishment from YHWH for their evil deeds toward the righteous. The day could happen in this life and surely be realized in the life to come.

### 11:7

כִּי־צַדִּיק יִהְיֶה צְדָקוֹת אֱהָב יֵשֶׁר יַחֲזֹן פְּנֵימוֹ:

Translation:

**For YHWH is righteous, He loves righteousness. The upright will see His face.**

This psalm concludes with the third and final כִּי clause of this Psalm. The first two כִּי clauses (vv. 2-3) gave the reasons the counselors told the psalmist to flee. The third כִּי clause informs the readers of the character of YHWH that caused him to take refuge in YHWH. The psalmist proclaimed that YHWH is righteous. This is the third and final use of the noun righteous in this psalm. The first two uses referenced the righteous persons (vv. 3, 5). Therefore, the psalmist is identifying YHWH with the upright.

“He loves righteousness” could mean YHWH loves to do righteous deeds or YHWH loves those who do righteous deeds. The last colon, “The upright<sup>47</sup> will see His face”<sup>48</sup> suggests

<sup>45</sup> Schaefer, *Psalms*, 29.

<sup>46</sup> I got the insight to contrast the faith of the counselors and the palmist from Saleska. See Saleska, *Psalms 1-50*, 269.

<sup>47</sup> Upright is singular in Hebrew. It is a collective noun, referring to the group of righteous people.

<sup>48</sup> LXX has a reading of εὐθύτητα, and the verse can be translated as “His face saw uprightness.” A scribe could have read יֵשֶׁר as יֵשֶׁר instead of יֵשֶׁר. Goldingay took the LXX reading and translated the verse “his face beholds the upright person”. See Goldingay, *Psalms*, 193. However, most translations follow the MT and interpret יֵשֶׁר as the subject. I believe the MT is the original reading because the LXX reading is not attested by other manuscripts.

that the latter is more likely. Because YHWH loves the righteous people, He will make sure they will see His face one day.

“See” (רָאָה) is the same Hebrew word that was used in verse 4, where the psalmist proclaims that YHWH sees and tests all humanity. But only the righteous will see YHWH face to face. To see YHWH's face is being in the presence of YHWH.<sup>49</sup> Being in the presence of God means the person will experience blessings from God, like having peace.

“See” (רָאָה) is an imperfect, probably used as a simple future, meaning the psalmist has hope that the righteous will see God one day in the future, but he did not focus on when it will happen in the future. The psalmist may mean the righteous will experience YHWH's favor to deliver them from troubles in this life (Num 6:22-27; Job 33:26; Ps 17:15). Or he could also mean the righteous will be in the presence of YHWH in the life to come (Job 19:26; Matt 18:10; Rev 22:4). It is likely that the psalmist probably has both views in mind.<sup>50</sup> The righteous will see the face of YHWH, spiritually speaking, in this life when they trust in YHWH in troubled times. But, even more so, the righteous will see the YHWH face to face in the life to come.

This psalm started and ended with YHWH. It started with the psalmist holding on to his trust in YHWH. It ended with the upright will see the face of YHWH. This is not a psalm of request but a psalm of trust.<sup>51</sup> In a crisis, the righteous may feel YHWH is hiding from them. But the psalmist proclaimed that he trusted in YHWH because YHWH is sovereign and righteous. He trusts YHWH would judge the wicked, most probably in this life, but surely in the life to

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<sup>49</sup> Where English translations refer to the “presence of God, the direct expression is almost always some variation on the Hebrew root *pnh* (“face”). See Longman and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, art. Hamilton, J. M. “Divine Presence.”

<sup>50</sup> I agree with Willem and Ross that the psalmist probably had both views in mind. See Willem, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 164. And Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 346. My reasons are, first, there are passages on the use of “face” of God figuratively for divine favor in this life (Num 6:22-27; Ps 30:7; 31:16), and there are passages on the use of “face” of God figuratively for in eternity the righteous will see God face to face (Ps 17:15; 19:26; 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4). Second, verse 7 is a contrastive parallel verse with verse 6, which I established earlier is about judgment in the future that will probably happen in this life but will surely happen the life to come. Therefore verse 7 should be about being in God's presence and experience His blessings in this life and surely in the life to come.

<sup>51</sup> Or a psalm of confidence. See Segal, *A New Psalm*, 50.

come. He trusts YHWH loves the righteous, and therefore the righteous will experience YHWH's presence in this life and in the life to come.<sup>52</sup>

#### **Part 4: Exegetical Summary**

##### Exegetical Idea

The psalmist holds on to his trust in YHWH when the destruction of lawful authority is imminent because YHWH is sovereign and righteous, therefore will ultimately punish the wicked and bless the righteous with His presence in this life as well as in the life to come.

##### Exegetical Summary

The psalmist held on to his trust in YHWH when his counselors advised him to flee because the attacks of the wicked were on the verge, and destruction of lawful authority was imminent. The psalmist trusted in YHWH because YHWH is sovereign and righteous. Since YHWH is sovereign, He sees and will test the deeds of all human beings. And since YHWH is righteous, He loves the righteous and hates the wicked. Therefore, YHWH will ultimately judge the wicked thoroughly and bless the righteous with His presence in this life and in the life to come.

#### **Part 5: Theological Summary**

##### Theological Idea

The righteous should hold on to their trust in God instead of fleeing with his own strength when faced with attacks from the wicked because God is sovereign and righteous, and He will ultimately judge the wicked thoroughly and bless the righteous with His presence in this life and the life to come.

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<sup>52</sup> Goldingay argued that this psalm is about the psalmist trusting YHWH because YHWH is involved in life now, not just in the past or in the future. He reasoned if YHWH acts of faithfulness and deliverance lie in near future or eschatological future, the psalmist trust in the YHWH would hardly make sense. See Goldingay, *Psalms*, 194. I argued that this psalm is about trusting in YHWH knowing that YHWH is righteous and will surely reward the righteous with His presence and punish the wicked in the future. The future could be referencing future in this life, but surely will be in eternity. Trusting YHWH that He will surely act righteously in the future in the midst of being attacked by the wicked is the thrust of this psalm.

## Theology Summary

Righteous people are people who believe in God (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:5). God desires righteous people to trust Him instead of trusting themselves when they face challenges in life (Exod 14:31; 2 Sam 22:1-3; 2 Titus 1:12). Those who trust in God will have peace, even when they are still in the midst of trouble (Isa 26:3-4; Phil 4:6-7) because God is sovereign in all things (Dan 4:35; Rom 9:19-21), He is omniscient (Job 34:21; Heb 4:12-13), and He is righteous (Deut 32:4; John 17:25). Therefore, God will judge the wicked with eternal punishment (Isa 59:18; 2 Thess 1:8-9) according to their deeds (Jer 17:10; Rev 22:12) and will bless the righteous with His presence in this life (Isa 41:10; Rom 8:31-39), and the righteous will see God face to face in eternity (Dan 12:2; 1 John 3:2; Rev 22:4). As Paul says, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (1 Cor 13:12).<sup>53</sup>

## Part 6: Homiletical Outline

### Homiletical Proposition

Trust the Lord in times of trouble.

### Body

- I. Trust the Lord because He is your refuge (11:1-3)
  - A. Beware of the advice from ungodly friends (11:1)
  - B. Beware of the attacks from the enemies (11:2-3)
- II. Trust the Lord because He is sovereign (11:4-5)
  - A. The Lord sees all things (11:4)
  - B. The Lord tests all things (11:5)
- III. Trust the Lord because He is righteous (11:6-7)
  - A. The Lord will punish the wicked (11:6)
  - B. The Lord will reward the righteous with His presence (11:7)

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<sup>53</sup> I agree with Saleska, who concluded his commentary on Psalm 11 with this, “The speaker’s assurance that the upright will gaze on God’s face (Ps 11:7) is our hope too (Rev 22:4). See Saleska, *Psalms 1-50*, 271.



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