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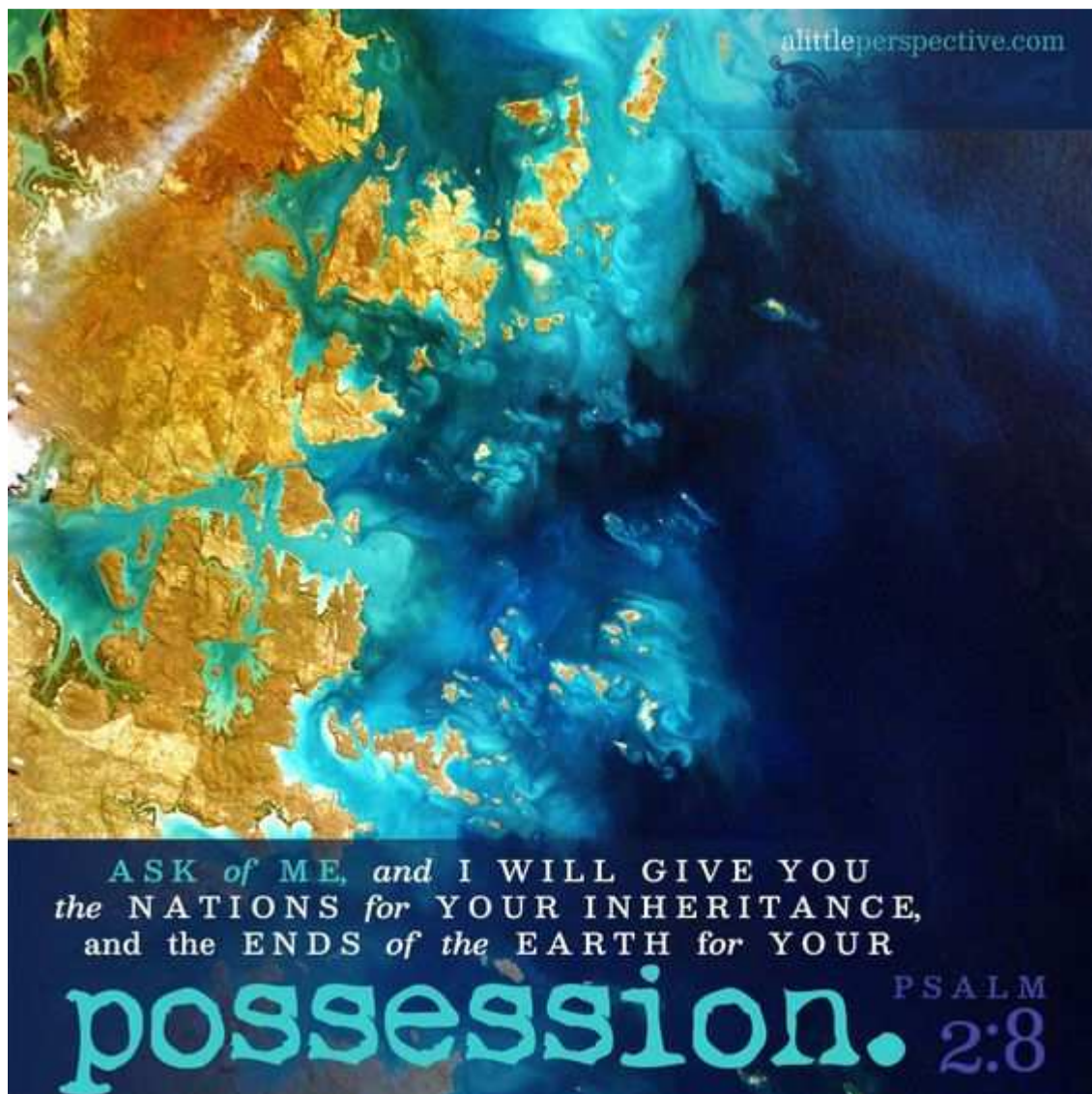
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PSALM 2: Linguistic-Literary Analysis & Translation



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1. Morphological-grammatical analysis

וְלֵאמֹר	גוֹיִם	רָגְשׁוּ	לְמָה	1
וְ . לְאֵם	גוֹי	רָגַשׁ	לְ . מָה	
and · [the] peoples	[the] nations	(they) conspire	* · why	
C · NCMPA	NCMPA	VaP3-P	P · I	

יְהִגּוּ-רִיק:

הגה · ריק

they plot · in vain
VaI3MP · NC-SA

יִתְיַצְּבוּ | 2 מְלִכֵי-אֶרֶץ וְרוֹזְנִים

יצב | 2 מְלִךְ · אֶרֶץ וְ · רוֹן
and · dignitaries [the] kings of · [the] earth (they) set themselves
C · VaR-MPA NCMPC · NC-SA Vgl3MP

נֹסְדוּ-יַחַד | 2 יֶסֶד · יַחַד עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל-מְשִׁיחוֹ:
יסד · יַחַד | 2 עַל · יהוה וְ · עַל · מְשִׁיח · הוא
and · against · anointed · his against · Yahweh they conspire · together
C · P · NC-SC · RS3MS P · NPMSA VdP3-P · NC-SA

נִגְתָּקָה | 3 נֶתַק אֶת-מוֹסְרוֹתֵימוֹ וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ
נתק | 3 אֶת · מוֹסְרָה · הֵם וְ · שֶׁלךְ מִן · אֲנַחְנוּ
[obj] · bonds · their let we|us break
PO · NCFPC · RS3MP VbI1-P-C
and · let we|us cast from · us
C · Vcw1-P-C P · RS1-P

עֲבַתֵּימוֹ:

עֲבַת · הֵם

cords · their
NCMP · RS3MP

יֹשֵׁב | 4 בְּשָׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק אֲדֹנִי

יֹשֵׁב | 4 בְּ · הֵ · שָׁמַיִם שִׁחַק אֲדֹן · אֲנִי
the Lord · * he laughs in · the · heaven [he who] sits
NPMSA · RS1-S VaI3MS P · A · NCMPA VaR-MSA

יִלְעַג-לָמוֹ:

לעג · לְ · הֵם

(he) derides · (for) · them
VaI3MS · P · RS3MP

אֲזַ יְדַבֵּר | 5 אֲלֵימוֹ בְּאִפּוֹ וּבִחְרוֹנוֹ
אֲזַ דָּבַר | 5 אֶל · הֵם בְּ · אִף · הוא וְ · בְּ · חֲרוֹן · הוא

and · in · fury · his in · wrath · his to · them he will speak then
C · P · NC-SC · RS3MS P · NC-SC · RS3MS P · RS3MP VbI3MS D

יְבַלְמוּ:

בהל · הם

he will terrify · them
VbI3MS · RS3MP

וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מֶלְכִי עַל־צִיּוֹן 6

וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מֶלְכִי עַל־צִיּוֹן
on · Zion king · my I have installed and¹ · I
P · NP-SA NC-SC · RS1-S VaP1-S C · RP1-S

הַר־קֹדֶשׁ:

הַר · קֹדֶשׁ · אֲנִי

the mountain|hill of · holiness · my
NC-SC · NC-SC · RS1-S

אֲסַפְּרָה אֵל חֶק יְהוָה אָמַר אֵלֵי 7

אֲסַפְּרָה אֵל חֶק יְהוָה אָמַר אֵלֵי
to · me he said Yahweh the rule of of I will announce
P · RS1-S VaP3MS NPMSA NC-SA P VbI1-S-C

בְּנִי אֶתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם * יִלְדְּתִיךָ:

בְּנִי אֶתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם * יִלְדְּתִיךָ

I have begotten · you day · the I you [are] son · my
VaP1-S · RS2MS A · NC-SA RP1-S RP2MS NC-SC · RS1-S

שָׂאֵל מִמֶּנִּי וְאַתָּה גוֹיִם נַחֲלָתְךָ 8

שָׂאֵל מִמֶּנִּי וְאַתָּה גוֹיִם נַחֲלָתְךָ
inheritance · your [the] nations and · I will give|make from · me ask
NCFSC · RS2MS NCMPA C · Vaw1-S-C P · RS1-S VaM2MS

אֶפְסֵי־אֶרֶץ:

אֶפְסֵי · אֶרֶץ

[the] ends of · [the] earth
NCMPA · NC-SA

וְאַחֲזִיתְךָ

וְאַחֲזִיתְךָ · אֶתָּה

and · possession · your
C · NCFSC · RS2MS

יֹצֵר	כְּכֵלִי	בְּרִזָּל	בְּשֶׁבֶט	תִּרְעֵם	9
יֹצֵר	כְּ . כֵלִי	בְּרִזָּל	בְּ . שֶׁבֶט	רַעַע . הֵם	
a potter	like · a vessel of	iron	with · a rod of	you shall break · them	
NC-SA	P · NC-SC	NC-SA	P · NC-SC	Val2MS · RS3MP	

תִּנְפָצִים:

נִפֵּץ . הֵם

you shall shatter · them
VbI2MS · RS3MP

10 וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים הַשְׁכִּילוּ

וְ . עַתָּה מְלָךְ שָׁכַל

have insight|be prudent [o] kings and · so then
VcM2MP NCMPA C · D

אֶרֶץ:

שֹׁפְטֵי

הַחוֹסְרֵי

אֶרֶץ

שֹׁפֵט

יֹסֵר

[the] earth
NC-SA

[o] rulers of
VaR-MPC

let you be instructed|be warned
VdM2MP

11 וְגִילוּ בְּרַעְדָּה: בְּעַבְדּוֹ אֶת־יְהוָה אֶת . יְהוָה עַבְדּוֹ

וְ . גִיל בְּ . רַעְדָּה
with · trembling and · rejoice
P · NCFSA C · VaM2MP

בְּ . יִרְאָה בְּ . יִרְאָה
with · fear
P · NCFSA

אֶת . יְהוָה אֶת . יְהוָה
[obj] · Yahweh
PO · NPMSA

עַבְדּוֹ עַבְדּוֹ
serve
VaM2MP

12 נִשְׁקוּ-בָר פֶּן־יֵאָנֶף

נִשְׁק . בָּר פֶּן . אָנֹף

so that not · he will be angry kiss|submit [to] · [the] son
C · Val3MS VbM2MP · NC-SA

וְתֵאבְדוּ דָרֶךְ כִּי־יִבְעַר כְּמַעַט אָפוּ

וְ . אַבְד דָּרֶךְ כִּי . בַּעַר כְּ . מַעַט אָף . הוּא

anger · his like · a little for · (he|it) burns (on the) way and · you will perish
NC-SC · RS3MS P · NC-SA C · Val3MS NC-SA C · Vaw2MP

אֲשֵׁרִי בַל־חוֹסִי

אֲשֵׁרִי כֹל . חֹסֶה

2. Discourse outline with textual and exegetical notes

Stanza A (NET)

Why¹ do the nations rebel?²

לִמָּה רָגְשׁוּ גוֹיִם ¹

Why are the countries³ devising plots⁴ that
 will fail?⁵

וְלֹא־יִכָּלְיוּ יְהוָה גּוֹיִם רִיק:

¹ Psalm 2 begins emphatically with a double rhetorical question (the initial interrogative word לִמָּה is implicit in line B). The psalmist expresses his outrage in defense of his God (YHWH) and chosen King—that the nations would have the audacity to rebel against them. DeClaissé et. al consider the first line to be “an exclamation of surprise” that indicates “puzzlement” (*Psalms*, 68). But that does not seem to be the correct connotation in this context; rather, these dramatic queries indicate a sharp warning and rebuke: How could these nations do such a foolish thing—they cannot win against the Almighty; they will most certainly fail—completely (יְהוָה גּוֹיִם רִיק)! This exclamative verse is underscored syntactically by a chiasmic construction: (1a) V—S // S—V (1b).

² The Hebrew verb רָגַשׁ occurs only here. In Dan. 6:6, 11, 15 the Aramaic cognate verb describes several officials acting as a group. A Hebrew nominal derivative is used in Ps. 55:14 of a crowd of people in the temple. Thus the context must direct the choice of a suitable equivalent in the TL—here, “rebel.”

³ Or “peoples” – the Heb. noun גּוֹיִם is used especially in poetic texts, e.g., Ps. 7:8. Note the alliteration between 1a and 1b that strengthens their sonic cohesion (see Phonology below).

⁴ The Hebrew imperfect form describes the rebellion as already underway. The verb הִגָּה is variously rendered, depending on the context, e.g., “recite quietly, meditate, moan, growl (lion).” Here it has the metonymic sense of enemies “devising, planning, plotting” (see Ps. 38:12; Pr. 24:2). This verb also occurs in Psalm 1—there in a positive sense with reference to the righteous (1:2)—thus forming another concrete, here contrastive connection between these two foundational, Psalter-initiating texts.

⁵ Lit., “[plotting] emptiness.” The noun רִיק (“emptiness”) may characterize the rebels’ behavior as “worthless, morally corrupt,” but more likely the term refers to the actual fruitless outcome of their plots, i.e., failure. This nuance is brought out in the rest of the psalm.

The kings of the earth⁶ form a united front;⁷

יִתְצָבוּ | מַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ ²

the rulers collaborate⁸

וְרוֹזְנִים נוֹסְדוּ-יַחַד

against the LORD and his anointed king.⁹

עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל-מְשִׁיחוֹ:

They say,¹⁰ “Let’s tear off the shackles they’ve put on us!”¹¹

נִנְתָּקָה אֶת-מוֹסְרוֹתֵינוּ ³

Let’s free ourselves from¹² their ropes!”

וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבֹתֵינוּ:

Stanza B

⁶ The hyperbolic expression “kings of the earth” refers to all those pagan kings, rulers, chieftains, warlords who had been conquered by and were subject to Israel in its heyday, in the latter days of King David and especially King Solomon. Some interpreters construe the rhetorical “Why?” (לָמָּה) of v. 1 as applying also to v. 2, e.g., “[Why] do earth’s kings take their stand...” (Goldingay, *Psalms*, 98; cf. Craigie, *Psalms*, 63).

⁷ Or “take their stand”; the imperfect verbal form describes their action as underway or ongoing. The verb יָצַב is found only in the Hithpael conjugation.

⁸ Or “conspire together” with the adverbial יַחַד; the verbal form is a Niphal from יָסַד, defined in BDB as “establish, found.” Another chiasmic construction highlights these adversarial actions: V-S / S-V.

⁹ Lit., “and against his anointed one” (מְשִׁיחוֹ); the Davidic king is the referent, as is clear from vv. 6-7. Suddenly, in this third colon, it is revealed *whom* these kings are foolishly rebelling against.

¹⁰ NET adds the words “they say” in order to indicate that the words here are hypothetically uttered by the rebellious kings—a common rhetorical device in the psalms, which allows the wicked to condemn themselves in their own words.

¹¹ Lit., “their (i.e., the LORD’s and the king’s) shackles (bonds)”; the enemy kings compare the just rule of the LORD and his chosen king to being imprisoned.

¹² Lit., “cast off from us” (שָׁלַךְ). The inner quotation of v. 3 brings stanza A to a close on an ironic note of defiance; it is incongruous for created beings to issue such self-commands (cohortatives) to their Creator! This simply emphasizes the futility of spiritual rebellion against the Almighty.

The one enthroned¹³ in heaven laughs in disgust;¹⁴

4 יוֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק

the Lord taunts¹⁵ them.

אֲדֹנָי יִלְעֹג-לָמוֹ:

Then¹⁶ he angrily speaks to them

5 אִזְ יִדְבֵּר אֵלֵימוּ בְּאַפּוֹ

and terrifies them in his rage,¹⁷ saying,¹⁸

וּבְחֵרוֹנוֹ יַבְהִימוּ:

“I myself¹⁹ have installed²⁰ my king

6 וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּחְתִּי מֶלֶכִּי

¹³ Lit., “the one sitting”; the Hebrew verb יָשַׁב is used metonymically in this royal setting with reference to “sitting enthroned” (see Pss. 9:7; 29:10; 55:19; 102:12; 123:1); this nominalized participle severs as a divine epithet and is fronted to focus on the shift to a new topic/agent.

¹⁴ Lit., “he laughs” (שָׁחַק); as the next, parallel line indicates, this refers to derisive, scornful laughter—surely not “amusement” (Goldingay, *Psalms*, 99). The Hebrew imperfect verbal forms in vv. 4-5 depict a dramatic scene, describing the action from the perspective of an eyewitness (the prophetic-psalmist) who is watching the divine response as it unfolds before his eyes.

¹⁵ Or “scoffs at,” “derides,” “mocks” (לָעַג); the subject/agent is again fronted for emphasis—It is the almighty ‘Lord’ (אֲדֹנָי—a form used only in reference to God) who mocks them! “Typically, the psalm makes it clear that **Yhwh** has the full emotional range of a person” (Goldingay, *Psalms*, 99)—*extreme anthropomorphism*!

¹⁶ “Then” (אִזְ)—used here as a stylistic device to introduce a stressed phrase. When things have reached a climactic stage, the point of judicial decision, at that point Yahweh makes his definitive regal pronouncement (v. 6).

¹⁷ “And [God] terrifies them in his rage.” This line anticipates the horrifying effect that God’s angry response (v. 6) is about to have on the rebellious kings (and all who follow them). Verse 5 features another chiasmic construction that syntactically puts the protagonists in angry, antithetical opposition: V-PP / PP-V.

¹⁸ NET inserts the implied word “saying” to indicate that the speaker of v. 6 is the Lord (cf. RSV, NIV).

¹⁹ The first person pronoun with preposed *waw* (וְאֲנִי) appears before the first person verbal form for emphasis (*constituent focus*), reflected in NET’s translation by “I myself”—which is reinforced also by the subsequent וְ alliteration. The direct quotation of v. 6 both parallels and also dramatically responds to that of the enemies in v. 3 (parallel end closures, or structural *epiphora*). They thought that they were going to escape God’s just rule; here Yahweh asserts that, instead, he is imposing the dominion of his chosen “king” (מֶלֶכִּי) over them—and they can do nothing about it, but rage on in futile resistance.

²⁰ “I have installed” is a metonymic translation (lit., ‘poured out a libation’); perhaps the verb (נָסַךְ) may be rendered “consecrated,” “anointed” here—even performatively: “I hereby install” (cf. 7c).

on Zion, my holy hill.”²¹

עַל־צִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדֶשׁ:

Stanza C

The king says,²² “I will announce the LORD’s decree.”²³

7 אֶסְפָּרָה אֶל חֵק

He said to me:²⁴

יְהוָה אָמַר אֵלַי

‘You are my son!’²⁵

בְּנִי אַתָּה

²¹ Lit., “the hill of holiness” (הַר־קֹדֶשׁ) – here a reference to the place, setting, or general situation in which Yahweh and his anointed king exercise their co-rule over God’s saints and, in a Messianic sense, over all people—the righteous in blessing, the wicked in judgment. As in the case of stanza A, this quotation, now by Yahweh, brings stanza B to a close. This “reference to Zion” is manifestly more than “an isolated note in the psalm” (Goldingay, *Psalms*, 100), for צִיּוֹן as the designation for the distinctive “holy locale” of Yahweh and/or his people will play a major *setting* role in the Psalter (nearly 40 occurrences).

²² NET inserts the words “the king says” for clarification. The speaker shifts from Yahweh in v. 6 to his chosen king in v. 7, thus also underscoring the support for a stanza break at this point.

²³ The initial cohortative verb indicates the speaker’s firm resolve to carry out the stated action. The “decree” (חֵק) in this case is the “personal covenant document, renewing God’s covenant commitment to the dynasty of David” (Craigie, *Psalms*, 67).

²⁴ Or “I will relate the decree. The LORD said to me” (as shown in the Hebrew lineation above, which ignores the Masoretic accentuation). This proposal results in a colon sequence in v. 7 of 3 + 3 + 2 + 3, as opposed to a tricolon: 4 + 4 + 3. The former reproduces the pattern of Ps. 2 where an agent in focus (here, יְהוָה) is fronted (cf. v. 4).

²⁵ The divine pronouncement “My son [are] you!” (*constituent focus*) is clearly performative speech—the very saying accomplishes its reference. The Davidic king was viewed as God’s “son” (see 2 Sam. 7:14a; Ps. 89:26-27). “The idiom reflects ancient Near Eastern adoption language associated with covenants of grant, by which a lord (king) would reward a faithful subject by elevating him to special status, referred to as “sonship.” Like a son, the faithful subject received an “inheritance,” viewed as an unconditional, eternal gift. Such gifts usually took the form of land and/or an enduring dynasty” (NET note).

This very day²⁶ I have become your father!²⁷

אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יְלִדְתִּיךָ:

Ask me,

שְׁאַל מִמֶּנִּי 8

and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,²⁸

וְאֶתְנָה גּוֹיִם נַחֲלָתְךָ

the ends of the earth as your personal property.²⁹

וְאַחֲזֶתְךָ אֶפְסֵי-אָרֶץ:

You will break them³⁰ with an iron scepter,³¹

9 תִּרְעֵם בְּשֵׁבֶט בְּרִזָּל

you will smash them like a potter's jar!³²

כְּכֵלִי יוֹצֵר תִּנְפֹּצִם:

Stanza D

²⁶ This fronted temporal reference—“today!” (הַיּוֹם)—is an instance of *constituent focus*: “The emphasis on *today* also occurs in other types of covenant renewal ceremony; see Deut 26:17 and 30:19” (Craigie, *Psalms*, 67).

²⁷ The fronted personal pronoun (אֲנִי), an instance of [renewed] *topic focus*, corresponds to “my son” (בְּנִי) in the preceding line—also phonologically.

²⁸ “The nations (X)—your inheritance (Y)”; a thematically significant juxtaposition. The LORD promises the Davidic king universal dominion, and the Messianic implications here become ever more apparent. The initial cohortative verb אֶתְנָה after the imperative שְׁאַל has a resultative sense.

²⁹ “And your personal possession (Y)—the ends of the earth (X’)”; colon 8c is semantically heightened and a chiasmic reversal of nominal expressions from 8b underscores the LORD’s promise.

³⁰ The LXX reads “you will shepherd them.” This reading, quoted in the Greek text of the NT in Rev. 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15, assumes a different vocalization of the consonantal Hebrew text and understands the verb as רָעָה (“to shepherd”) rather than רָעַע (“to break”). But the presence of נִפֵּץ (“to smash”) in the next line strongly favors the MT vocalization. Goldingay proposes a deliberate rhetorical ambiguity here, namely, that this line “lays alternative possibilities before the nations—either firm shepherding or devastating destruction” (*Psalms*, 101). We have yet another chiasmic, verb-based structure.

³¹ The Hebrew term שֵׁבֶט can refer to a “staff” or “rod” (hence the possible allusion to “shepherding” in the preceding line). But here it undoubtedly refers to the Davidic king’s royal scepter, symbolizing his sovereignty and right to rule.

³² “Like a potter’s jar” – before the Davidic king’s awesome power, backed by almighty Yahweh, the rebellious nations are like fragile pottery, ready to be smashed to pieces if they persist in their rebellion. The quotation of the LORD’s “decree” ends here, thus concluding the stanza (C), once more with embedded direct discourse (as in stanzas A and B).

So now, you kings, do what is wise;³³

וַעֲתָה מְלָכִים הַשְׁכִּילוּ 10

you rulers of the earth, submit to correction!³⁴

הִוְסְרוּ שַׁפְטֵי אֶרֶץ:

Serve³⁵ the LORD in fear!

עֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּיִרְאָה 11

Repent in terror!³⁶

וְגִילוּ בְרַעְדָּה:

Give sincere homage!³⁷

נִשְׁקוּ־בֶרֶךְ 12

³³ “So now...” (וַעֲתָה) – a standard discourse opener begins stanza D. The speaker here is either the psalmist or the Davidic king (in context, probably the latter), who now addresses the rebellious kings.

³⁴ The Niphal of יָסַר has here a tolerative nuance; the kings are urged to submit themselves to the corrective advice being offered. The LORD’s judgment upon them has been pronounced, but the requisite punishment has not yet been meted out – there is still time to repent, submit, and serve Yahweh and his appointed king. This is proverbial, “wisdom” instruction (cf. Prov. 1:2-8, 16:22). Verse 10 again observes the poet’s preference for chiasmic arrangements: Voc. + Impv. / Impv. + Voc.

³⁵ The Hebrew verb translated “serve” (עָבַד) refers here to submitting to the Lord’s gracious sovereignty as expressed through the rule of the Davidic king. Such “service” (perhaps even “worship”) in a human ANE setting would involve maintaining allegiance to the Davidic king—and God!—as “vassals” by paying the stipulated tribute and making regular sacrificial offerings of obeisance to the deity.

³⁶ Traditionally, “rejoice with trembling” (KJV). The verb גִּיל normally means “rejoice,” but this meaning does not seem to fit well together with “in trembling” (but see Goldingay, *Psalms*, 102). Some try to understand “trembling” (and the parallel יִרְאָה, yir’ah, “fear”) in the sense of “reverential awe” and then take the verbs “serve” and “rejoice” in the sense of “worship” (cf. NASB). But רַעְדָּה (“trembling”) and its related terms consistently refer to utter terror and fear (see Ex. 15:15; Job 4:14; Pss. 48:6, 55:5, 104:32; Isa. 33:14; Dan. 10:11) or at least great emotional distress (Ezr. 10:9). It seems more likely here that גִּיל carries its polarized meaning “mourn, lament,” as in Hos. 10:5. “Mourn, lament” would then be metonymic in this context for “repent” (referring to one’s rebellious ways). On the meaning of the verb in Hos. 10:5, see F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Hosea* (AB), 556-57 (NET note adapted).

³⁷ Traditionally, “kiss the son” (KJV)—“the *crux interpretum* of Ps 2” (Craigie, *Psalms*, 64; see his full discussion there). But בֶּרֶךְ is the Aramaic word for “son,” not the Hebrew (cf. Prov. 31:2). For this reason many regard the reading as suspect. Some propose emendations of vv. 11-12. One of the more popular proposals is to read ... (*bir’adah nash equ leraslayv*, “in trembling kiss his feet”). It makes better sense to understand בֶּרֶךְ as an adjective meaning “pure” (see Pss. 24:4, 73:1 and BDB 141 s.v. בֶּרֶךְ 3) functioning here in an adverbial sense. If read this way, then the syntactical structure of exhortation (imperative followed by adverbial modifier) corresponds to the two preceding lines (see v. 11). The verb נִשָּׁק (“kiss”) refers metonymically to showing homage (see 1 Sam. 10:1; Hos. 13:2). The exhortation in v. 12 advocates a

Otherwise he will be angry,³⁸

and you will die because of your behavior,³⁹

when his anger quickly ignites.⁴⁰

How blessed⁴¹ are all who take shelter in him!⁴²

פְּזִיאַנְךָ |

וְתֵאבְדוּ דְרָךְ

כִּי־יִבְעַר בְּמַעַט אַפּוֹ

אֲשֶׁר־י בָּל־חוּסֵי בּוֹ:

genuine expression of allegiance and warns against insincerity. When swearing allegiance, vassal kings would sometimes do so insincerely, with the intent of rebelling when the time was right. The so-called “Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon” also warn against such an attitude. In this treaty the vassal is told: “If you, as you stand on the soil where this oath [is sworn], swear the oath with your words and lips [only], do not swear with your entire heart, do not transmit it to your sons who will live after this treaty, if you take this curse upon yourselves but do not plan to keep the treaty of Esarhaddon ...may your sons and grandsons because of this fear in the future” (see J. B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East*, 2:62)” (NET note, adapted; see also deClaissé et. al, *Psalms*, 67; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 103).

³⁸ The particle **פֶּן** indicates a negative purpose/result relationship. The implied subject of the verb is the LORD, mentioned in v. 11. Elsewhere in BH the subject of this verb is consistently the LORD, suggesting it may be a technical term for divine anger. Anger is here used metonymically for judgment, as the following statement makes clear. A Moabite cognate occurs in the Mesha inscription, where it is used of the Moabite god Chemosh's anger at his people (see J. B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East*, 1:209). (NET note, adapted)

³⁹ Lit., “and you will perish [in the] way.” The Hebrew word **דֶּרֶךְ** (“way”) here refers to their rebellious behavior, and it functions syntactically as an adverbial accusative in relation to the verb “perish.”

⁴⁰ Or “burns.” The LORDs anger is compared here to fire, the most destructive force known in ancient Israel.

⁴¹ The Hebrew noun is an abstract plural. The word often refers metonymically to the happiness—perhaps better: overall “well-being”—that God-given security and prosperity produce (see Pss. **1:1** (*inclusio* of Pss. 1-2), 34:9, 41:1, 65:4, 84:12, 89:15, 106:3, 112:1, 127:5, 128:1, 144:15).

⁴² “Taking shelter” in the Lord is an idiom for seeking and enjoying his protection. This also demonstrates the subject’s loyalty to the Lord God. In the psalms those who “take shelter” in God are contrasted with the wicked and equated with those who love, fear, and serve him (Pss 5:11-12, 31:17-20, 34:21-22). DeClaissé et. al assert that “the closing colon of the psalm is not properly a part of Psalm 2. Its congratulatory tone is out of sync with the admonishments that close the psalms (sic, psalm)” (*Psalms*, 67). However, this salutary benediction could certainly apply to all those rulers who do submit to the Son’s instructions and who “serve the LORD with fear” (vv. 10-11). In any case, 2:12b appears to complement 1:6a, thus marking a parallel closure (structural *epiphora*) for both psalms.

3. Phonological overview (<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/mp3/t2602.mp3>)

1 לְמַה רָגַשׁוּ גּוֹיִם
 וְלֵאמֹר יִהְיוּ-רִיק:
 2 יִתְעַבּוּ מַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ
 וְרוֹזְנִים נוֹסְדוּ-יַחַד
 עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל-מְשִׁיחוֹ:
 3 וְנִתְקָה אֶת-מוֹסְרוֹתֵימוֹ
 וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבֹתֵימוֹ:
 4 יוֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק
 אֲדֹנָי יִלְעַג-לָמוֹ:
 5 אִזּוֹ יִדְבֹּר אֱלִימוֹ בְּאָפוֹ
 וּבַחֲרוֹנוֹ יִבְהַלְמוּ:⁴³
 6 וְאֵנִי נִסְכָּתִי מַלְכֵי
 עַל-צִיּוֹן הֶרֶקְדָּשִׁי:
 7 אֲסַפְּרָה אֵל חֶק
 יְהוָה אֲמַר אֱלֹהֵי
 בְּנֵי אֲתָה
 אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָּתִיד:

⁴³ "In vv 3-5, the poet plays on the sound /o/, producing an effect which is like rhyme (unusual in Hebrew poetry). The sound appears first in the arrogant words of the earthly rulers (v 3), but then the same sound of arrogance is converted into a sound anticipating woe in the words introducing God's response (vv 4b, 5)" (Craigie, *Psalms*, 65).

8 שְׁאֵל מִמֶּנִּי

וְאַתָּנָה גּוֹיִם נַחֲלִיתָךְ

וְאַחֲזִיתָךְ אֶפְסֵי־אָרֶץ:

9 תִּרְעַם בְּשֵׁבֶט בְּרֹזֶל

בְּכָלִי יוֹצֵר תִּנְפָצִים:

10 וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים הַשְׁכִּילוּ

הַחוּסְרוּ שִׁפְטֵי אָרֶץ:

11 עֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בִּירְאָה

וְגִילוּ בְּרַעְדָּה:

12 נִשְׁקוּ־בָר

פֶּן־יֵאָנֶף

וְתֵאבְדוּ דֶּרֶךְ

כִּי־יִבְעַר כְּמַעַט אֶפֶן

אֲשֶׁר־י כָּל־חוּסֵי בּוֹ:

Psalm 2 – additional sonic description

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-1/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-2/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-3/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-4/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-5/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-6/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-7/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-8/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-9/>

<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-10/>
<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-11/>
<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-12a/>
<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/scripture-passage/psalm-2-12b/>
<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/extended-exegetical-discussions/psalms-26-weekend-edition/>

Cross References for Psalm 2:

- 2:1 - Psalms 21:11; 83:5; Proverbs 24:2
- 2:2 - Psalm 48:4
- 2:2 - 1 Samuel 9:16; John 1:41
- 2:2 - Psalm 74:18, 23; Acts 4:25-26
- 2:3 - Job 36:8
- 2:3 - 2 Samuel 3:34; Jeremiah 5:5
- 2:4 - Isaiah 37:16; Isaiah 40:22; 66:1
- 2:4 - Psalm 37:13; 59:8; Proverbs 1:26
- 2:5 - Psalms 6:1; 27:9; 38:1
- 2:5 - Psalms 21:9; 79:6; 90:7; 110:5
- 2:6 - Psalms 10:16; 24:10
- 2:6 - 2 Kings 19:31 ; Psalms 9:11; 48:2, 11; 78:68; 110:2; 133:3
- 2:6 - Exodus 15:17
- 2:7 - Matthew 3:17; 4:3
- 2:7 - 2 Samuel 7:14; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5
- 2:8 - Revelation 2:26
- 2:8 - Job 22:26; Matthew 21:38
- 2:8 - Psalms 22:27; 67:7
- 2:9 - Genesis 49:10; Revelation 12:5
- 2:9 - Exodus 15:6; Psalm 89:23
- 2:9 - Isaiah 30:14; Jeremiah 19:10; Revelation 2:27; 19:15
- 2:10 - Proverbs 27:11
- 2:10 - Psalm 141:6; Proverbs 8:15; Amos 2:3
- 2:11 - Psalm 103:11
- 2:11 - Psalms 9:2; 35:9; 104:34; Isaiah 61:10; Hebrews 12:28
- 2:11 - 1 Chronicles 16:30; Psalm 119:119-120
- 2:12 - ver 7; John 5:23
- 2:12 - Deuteronomy 9:8; Revelation 6:16
- 2:12 - Psalm 84:12
- 2:12 - Psalms 5:11; 34:8; 64:10; Romans 9:33

4. Literary-structural summary

Psalm 2 might seem a second false start for the Psalter, representing another form of speech we would not expect in a book called *tehillim*. As ps. 1 would be at home in Proverbs, so Ps. 2 would be at home in a prophetic book.⁴⁴

Psalm 2 is a very symmetrically structured royal proclamation that almost sounds like it is being verbally opened (perhaps also closed) by some august angelic spokesperson who is present in the very throne room of heaven. On the other hand, one might argue that the authorized speakers of the first and last sections are in fact the “righteous persons” who have just been vindicated by the Lord’s judgment in Psalm 1 (vv. 5-6).

The text consists of four stanzas, each of which is comprised of three verses, which are longer in lexical length in the second half: A (22 words), B (19), C (25), D (26). The two outer stanzas focus on earthly kings, while the inner pair focus on YHWH and his divinely anointed (Davidic) king.⁴⁵ That is the probable reason for the positioning of Psalm 2 at the head of the Psalter: “A central theme of the entire biblical tradition is the kingdom of God” (Craigie, *Psalms*, 68)—and this in sharp contrast to all earthly kings and worldly regimes. This thematic-pragmatic arrangement may be displayed as follows:

⁴⁴ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 94. From another perspective, Ps. 2 might be viewed as a poetic drama, a “coronation” scene in heaven captured *in media res* by the psalmist, who may be the appointed speaker who declares the final warning of vv. 10-12 (others interpret these as being the words of the Son, who is addressing the nations, in particular, their rulers; cf. vv. 7-9) (Goldingay, *Psalms*, 96).

⁴⁵ The theological significance of this psalm, the two inner stanzas in particular and the central concept of “Father—Sonship,” harks back to the establishment of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7:8-16, for example: “I (YHWH) will be his (David/descendant) father and he shall be my son” (v. 14; cf. Ps. 89:26). Psalm 2 is stated more forcefully in v. 7: “‘I have begotten you’ is metaphorical language; it means more than simply adoption, which has legal overtones, and implies that a ‘new birth’ of a divine nature took place during the coronation” (Craigie, *Psalms*, 67). One is left to wonder, however, how much spiritual import the descendants of David, most of them anyway, attached to this official ceremony and public enactment.

A (1-3) – *worldly rulers verbally rebel against the LORD and “his anointed one”*⁴⁶

B (4-6) – **God silences all enemies by introducing “my king”**

C (7-9) – **Yahweh officially installs and commissions “my Son”**

D (10-12) – *worldly rulers are warned to submit to the LORD and “the Son”*

Two primary motives emerge, each of which is lexically supported and conceptually integrated throughout the text: human/divine SPEECH rejects // promotes KINGSHIP (see DeClaissé et al., *Psalms*, 66). As noted in the preceding microtextual analysis, each stanza ends in a significant quotation (direct speech)—except for the last, where the silence of acquiescence is presupposed (the worldly kings have nothing more to say). The flow of principal “speech-acts” and associated “attitudes” is as follows:

A – rulers *arrogantly* RENOUNCE God/divine King;

B – God *angrily* REPROACHES rulers;

C – Yahweh *reassuringly* ORDAINS Son,⁴⁷

D – The Son/righteous psalmist *sternly* REPRIMANDS rulers.

Craigie feels that the first “climax” of the psalm occurs in v. 6: “God terrifies the earthly rulers, not with any direct threat, but simply with the announcement that he has established his king in Zion” (*Psalms*, 66)—no ordinary monarch, but one who has all the authority and power of the sole Deity, Yahweh, behind him. Craigie does not explicitly indicate where another “climax” occurs, but that must surely be in the very next verse (7), where the divine performative act is uttered: אֱלֹהֵי בְנֵי אָדָמָה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָּתִיךָ. Thus, the psalm’s emotive (6) and thematic (7) high points coincide in the center of the text, whereas the implications of this momentous divine decree is situated on the borders of the text: all impudent insurrectionists (stanza A) will be mercifully given a chance to fall into line and accept the new King’s rule (and receive a blessing, v. 12c); failing that, they must face the dire consequences of God’s righteous decrees (stanza D).

⁴⁶ “The royal title is derived from the fact that the king on his coronation is anointed (1 Kgs 1:45), an act symbolizing that he was set aside from other persons to perform a particular service” (Craigie, *Psalms*, 66)—in this case, a divine commission to carry out a cosmic mission.

⁴⁷ Stanza C features a foregrounded quote within a quote, where the Son reiterates the words of ordination pronounced by Yahweh. Craigie argues for the psalmist being the speaker of the concluding words of stern warning found in stanza D (*Psalms*, 65).

All the antagonists engaged in this cosmic drama are introduced in vv. 1-2 and remain “on stage” throughout the semi-narrative progressions that gives the text thematic cohesion (frequently underscored by chiasmic syntactic constructions) as well as performative impact and poetic appeal. Therefore, this psalm is ideally suited for some form of oral-aural articulation (recitation, chanting, song). It concludes with an encouraging “blessing” (אַשְׁרֵי) upon all of God’s faithful people (2:12; cf. 1:1, 6)—those who revere his Son (Ps. 2) and walk in his righteous ways (Ps. 1). Psalms 1-2, neither of which has a superscription (like most of the other psalms of Book I), appear to deliberately juxtaposed here to function as the poetic introduction to the Psalter as a whole. The royal “kingship” and sapiential “wisdom” focus and foundation for the entire Psalmic scroll has thereby been textually established—also with clear Messianic import.

The authoritative divine instruction that concludes these two psalms (1:5-6, 2:10-12) thus reinforce divine sovereignty along with human responsibility and “serve as a key to the message of the Psalter as a whole” (Goldingay, *Psalms*, 103). Furthermore, the words and implications of this prominent second psalm have an eschatological implication that reverberates right through to the close of the Christian Scriptures: “The Revelation, in the symbolic and mysterious language of its writer, contain an anticipation of the ultimate rule and triumph of the man born to be King in the language and imagery of Ps 2 (Rev 1:5; 2:27; 4:2; 6:17; 12:5; 19:5 and others)” (Craigie, *Psalms*, 69).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ The illustration below: David dictating the Psalms (perhaps even Psalm 13!), codex binding. Ivory, comes from the Treasure of Saint-Denis, France, end of the 10th –11th century:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Psalms#/media/File:Codex_binding_Louvre_MR373.jpg .



5. Examples of a poetic translation

A literary (artistic-rhetorical) translation is required in order to match the verbal excellence of the original text. As Craigie correctly observes: “Through a variety of artistic devices, the poet has created a psalm of power and elegance, worthy of the drama of its theme” (Psalms, 65). Timothy Wilt (see below, from his collection, *Praise, Prayer and Protest*, 3) renders Psalm 2 along the lines of a poetic narrative, as suggested by Goldingay (*Psalms*, 96):⁴⁹

⁴⁹ I have attempted to follow the text as originally formatted. Evaluate the content and tone of this dramatic re-creation in translation. Suggest possible corrections or modifications where needed.

Warlords and petty kings ally themselves and rouse their rabble.

“We’ll be no one’s slaves. Let’s break away” they say, rebels

Against Yahweh and the one he has chosen to rule over all.

Yahweh watches from heaven. He laughs at their delusions,
for a moment, then speaks, from the holy mountain Zion: “I
have enthroned and empowered the one to rule on my behalf.”

They freeze, terrified by his anger.

Then our kind speaks: “Yahweh has said to me: ‘Today, I
Give birth to you. You are my son. Over any nation you ask
from me, wherever it may be, I give you full rights. If you wish,
take an iron club and smash the clay men.

“So swear allegiance to me, Yahweh’s chosen
representative. And serve Yahweh as subjects a breath away
from death, as ones whose slightest offense will rouse his
annihilating anger.”

How wonderful it is

for those who come to Yahweh for protection!

—*For the Royalty*

The second example of Psalm 2 is a “metrical version” in English composed by Fred R. Anderson.⁵⁰ He defines this as “a poetic paraphrase of a biblical text, set in contemporary, vernacular language, versified in strict meter, and usually rhymed, so that it can be sung to a well-known tune of the same metrical setting. Metrical settings are characterized and named by the number of syllables in each line and the number of lines in each stanza (there are no limits to stanzas, but three to five are quite normal)” (Anderson 2016:xv; the meter for Psalm 2 is given as: 7.7.7.7 *D* – *Aberystwyth*, *Hintze*; *ibid.*:5).

⁵⁰ Fred R. Anderson, *Singing God’s Psalms: Metrical Psalms and Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 26-27.

Why are the nations gumbling,
And conspiring plots in vain?
Rulers of the world rise up,
Weaving webs of death and pain.
Then against the Lord they cry,
And against God's Holy Son,
"Let us tear their bonds from us,
And with their control be done."

But the Lord has scorn on them,
Laughing and enthroned on high;
God brings wrath upon their work,
Filled with anger God replies:
"It is my own holy will
That the Christ on earth shall reign,
And on Zion's holy hill
My anointed I'll maintain."

God's decree unto the King
Tells what the Lord did say:
"You are my own holy child,
I've begotten you this day.
Ask of me and I will make
All the nations your own stay.
These possessions you shall rule,
Strong as iron smashing clay."

Therefore leaders of the earth,
Serve the Lord with holy fear;
Trembling come before the throne,
Or God's anger will appear.
Kiss God's feet in trembling awe,
Or the Lord will use the rod,
Making beggars of all kings.
Blest are those who trust in God.

The third and final example of a poetic translation comes from the restructuring of Psalm 2 prepared by William A. Smalley, with special emphasis upon the "expressive function" of language, that is, in an effort to recreate in English "the mood and emotional thrust of the Psalm."⁵¹

⁵¹ William A. Smalley, *Restructuring Translations of the Psalms as Poetry*, in M. Black and Wm. Smalley, eds., *On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 337-371.

1a The subject peoples are planning rebellion...
 1b Their people are plotting...
 2a Their kings and rulers join in revolt...
 3 "Freedom!" they say,
 "Freedom from rule!"
 "off with control
 2b of the Lord
 and the king he has chosen."
 1b Plotting
 Useless plots.
 1a Why?
 4 The Lord laughs on his throne.
 Mocks them in heaven.
 5b Furious, he terrifies them,
 5a Speaks to them, angry,
 6b "I have installed the king,
 Placed him on Zion,
 My holy hill."
 7 And the king announces
 What the Lord has declared to him:
 "You are my son.
 Today I became your father.
 8 Ask me for the nations,
 and I'll give you them.
 Ask for the earth,
 and the whole world will be yours
 9 to rule.
 Break the nations in pieces
 Like a clay pot smashes.
 Rule them with a harsh king's rule."
 10 So listen closely, rebel kings.
 Watch out, you plotting rulers.
 11 Tremble!
 12 Bow down!
 11 Serve him with fear
 or you will die!
 But people are happy
 who go to the Lord
 for protection.

Smalley concludes with several caveats regarding poetic translation (1974: 360, 363, 366):

- The better the poem, of course, the more subtle and powerful is its text structure ..., the tightly-knit interplay of many elements on many levels of deep and surface structure. This cannot be preserved as such in translation, but elements of deep structure which the translator keeps must be formed into a new intricate text structure in the receptor language.
- A dynamic equivalent translation must evoke [the original functions], and although the information content should be fully preserved in translation, it should be integrated with the expressive function, which is primary. As with all translation, this can only be done in English by changing the poetic form, and translating the meaning in terms of another surface structure than that of the original.
- To the degree that there is a poem in the original there should be a poem of nearly equivalent value in the receptor language if the other functions involved are also suitable to verse form in the receptor language.
- Translation is not an interlingual Xerox process which produces the same work of art in another language. Every piece of literary art, whether a poem or a piece of literary prose, is in some respects unique. It is a unique combination of deep and surface structure elements, and has a gestalt all its own. ... If the restructuring is done by an artist equivalent to the original artists, presumably he [she] can produce an equivalent piece of literary art with a different surface structure, but with the same content and function.

6. Guide questions for analyzing and translating Psalm 2

- With reference to the three translations reproduced about, which one sounds more “poetic” in English? Give reasons for your opinion?
- Would each version be more appropriate for a particular audience or group of readers? Suggest any differences that come to mind.
- Which version do you prefer—and why?
- Do you have any improvements to suggest for any of these versions?

New Revised Standard Version

1 Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying,

3 "Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us."

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision.

5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling
12 kiss his feet, or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled. Happy are all who take refuge in him.
<http://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/psalms/2.html>

Whole Text:

- a) What is the genre of this psalm? Give reasons for your answer. Do you have a similar genre in your language (YL)? Can this genre be used as a model to follow when translating Psalm 2 in YL? Explain why—or why not.
- b) Into how many parts (stanzas) would you divide Psalm 2? Which verses belong in each stanza? Tell how each stanza is related to the next in meaning.
- c) Explain why you have divided the psalm in this way—what are the discourse “markers” in the text on which you are basing your decisions?
- d) Give a one-sentence summary of each stanza. Then suggest a general theme (or title) for Psalm 2 as a whole.
- e) How does the genre and content of this psalm relate to that of Psalm 1? Of Psalm 3?

Verse 1:

- a) What sort of question do we find in v. 1? What is the expected answer to this question? Actually, there are two questions here, but the second one has been elided in line B. What is this elided question?
- b) Are rhetorical questions commonly used in YL? How are they marked linguistically? Could RQs be used effectively (naturally) here at the beginning of Psalm 2 in YL? If not, how can their impact and intended implication be replaced?
- c) Who are the “nations” referred to in v. 1? How are they different from the “peoples” (גוֹיִם, אֲמִלִּים)? Would a literal translation suggest that two entirely different groups are involved here? If so, how would you clarify the intended sense in YL?

- d) What do the verbs “conspire” (רָגְשׁוּ) and “plot in vain” (יִהְגּוּ־רִיק) mean? What aspect of meaning is added in line B, and how can this be expressed in YL?

Verse 2:

- a) How is verse 2 related in meaning to verse 1? What is different then with regard to content?
- b) Are two different groups of political leaders referred to here, or just one? Explain—also how you would convey this in YL.
- c) How do you express the two verbs of lines A&B?
- d) How do you translate “Yahweh” (the Tetragrammaton—יְהוָה) in YL? Explain why this is a good—or not the best—choice. Are there any good alternatives that might be considered?
- e) How do you translate “Anointed One” (מָשִׁיחַ)? To whom does this term refer? There are two possibilities: Does one exclude the other? Explain. How do you express the concept of “anointing” in YL? Does this procedure have any special significance in your culture, whether traditional or contemporary? Explain.

Verse 3:

- a) Who is speaking in verse 3? How do you know? Does this shift need to be marked in your translation? If so, how can this be done?
- b) What do the kings of the earth propose to do in their speech of lines A&B? What sort of attitude is being expressed here, and how can this be rendered in YL?
- c) What kind of figure of speech do we find involving “chains” and “fetters”? Can this be translated literally in YL, or does some adjustment need to be made (specify)?

Verse 4:

- a) Why is it reasonable to begin a new stanza at v. 4? List the various structural markers that indicate a break here.
- b) What is the general figure of speech in v. 4 called? Is it common to describe or speak of “God” as a human being in your culture? Explain.

- c) What does “the one who sits in the heavens” (יֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם) mean? How can this concept be expressed in YL?
- d) Does God ever “laugh” (יִשְׁחַק) according to the religious traditions of your culture? If so, what does this signify? In this particular context, why does God laugh? How would you render this in YL?
- e) How do you translate “Lord” (יְהוָה) in YL?
- f) What does it mean to say that God is “mocking” (יִלְעַג) someone? Could the connotation of this concept present a problem in your sociocultural context? Explain.
- g) Whom is God mocking and why? How do you know this?

Verse 5:

- a) How does v. 5 intensify the thought of v. 4? How, in turn, does the B poetic line of v. 5 intensify the A line?
- b) What is the best way to translate the initial adverb “then” (אָז)—what is the rhetorical function of this particle?
- c) The verb in the Hebrew line A is “he speaks” (יִדְבָּר); does a literal reproduction work in YL—that is, in conjunction with “anger” (אָז)? Explain. If not, what verb better renders the sense?
- d) How does “wrath” (חֵרֶן) differ from “anger”? Note: “The noun translated fury is used in the Old Testament only with God as subject. It means literally “burning,” that is, an anger that consumes and destroys the enemy (see Exo 15.7)” (UBS *Handbook on Psalms*, Paratext version). Are you able to convey the notion of “burning” with the same sense (cf. Chewa: *amapya mtima* “he burns [in] heart” – an idiom)?
- e) Why is the Lord so angry? Is the intended sense and connotation clear in your translation? If not, how can you modify it to get the idea across?

Verse 6:

- a) Who is speaking the words of this verse? How can you make this clear in YL without upsetting the poetic character of your translation?

- b) Note the additional emphasis upon the initial Hebrew pronoun “and I” (וְאֲנִי). How can you convey this idiomatically in YL?
- c) How do you express the idea of “installing a king” (נִסְכַּחְתִּי מֶלֶךְ) in YL? What does God mean by saying “my king”? Does the semantic relationship implied by the possessive form need to be made explicit in your translation? If so, how would you do this?
- d) Note the ellipsis in line B of this verse: what has been omitted as being understood from the context?
- e) How do you translate the proper name “Zion” (צִיּוֹן)? Note *Handbook on Psalms*: “The name Zion was applied to the hill (Mount Moriah) on which Solomon built the Temple; by extension the name was applied to the Temple, to the city of Jerusalem, and sometimes to the whole land of Israel. The hill is called holy because it belongs exclusively to God.”
- f) Why is this “hill” called “holy” (הַר־קֹדֶשׁ)? How is the concept of “holiness” expressed in YL? Is an explanatory footnote needed to make the sense of this verse clear? If so, how would you word it?

Verse 7:

- a) What text markers indicate that a new stanza begins at v. 7?
- b) How many speakers appear to be saying something in this verse? Who are they, and how can you distinguish them in YL? In addition, is an explanatory footnote necessary?
- c) How would you express the strong (cohortative) initial verb: “Let me announce” (אֶסְפָּרָה)?
- d) What is a “decree” (חֹק) and where is it found in v. 7?
- e) Note the contrastive chiasmic construction of the paralleled lines of the Lord’s pronouncement: x: my-son, y: you; y’: I, x’: today I-have-begotten-you (בְּנִי אַתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם (יִלְדִיתִּי)). Both lines are saying the same thing, but in different words. It is important to know the cultural background that acts as a frame of reference for these important words: “‘You are my son!’ The Davidic king was viewed as God’s “son” (see 2Sa 7:14; Ps 89:26-27). The idiom reflects ancient Near Eastern adoption language associated with covenants of grant, by which a lord would reward a faithful subject by elevating him to special status, referred to as “sonship.” Like a son, the faithful subject received an “inheritance,” viewed as an unconditional, eternal gift. Such gifts usually took the form of land and/or an enduring dynasty” (NET Study Note). First of all then, how do you express the notion

of being “begotten” in YL (note that a euphemistic expression may be needed here). Compare your version with translations in other languages to see if improvement can be made.

- f) To which “day” or “time” does “today” (הַיּוֹם) refer to? How would you make this clear in your translation?

- g) Note the comments of the *Handbook on Psalms* regarding this verse:

The major problem in translating verse 7b is making clear to whom the pronouns refer (*moreover these references must not be confused with those of v. 6*). This may often be done by using direct speech; for instance, “God said to me, ‘You, king, are now my son’” or indirectly “God told me that I the king am his son.” The expression today I have begotten you may create confusion, as a king is not normally begotten on the day he is made king. It may be necessary to relate this explicitly to the day of enthronement; for example, “On this the day of your becoming king I have become your father. – Are these observations helpful? What could you add to the preceding after translating this verse yourself?

Verse 8:

- a) Who is speaking the words of verses 8-9? How can you make this clear in your translation?
- b) What is being asked for in this verse? To whom does the term “nations” (גּוֹיִם) refer? How does this differ in reference from “the ends of the earth” (אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ) in line B? Is there a figurative way of saying this (cf. Chewa: *kumphepo zonse zinai* ‘to the four winds’)?
- c) What is the difference in meaning between “inheritance” (נַחֲלָה) and “possession” (אֲחֻזָּה)? Does this difference need to be maintained in translation? Explain. Do the comments in the *Handbook on Psalms* give you any help?

Heritage is a term often used in the Old Testament of what God gives his people; it involves the idea of permanent possession. Many times it refers to the land of Canaan as Israel’s gift from God (see Deut 4.21); the word *possession* is similarly used (see Gen 17.8; Deut 32.49). The noun “heritage” and the verb “to inherit” do not, in a context like this, carry the meaning ordinarily associated with these terms, that is, of a gift or a right that is given someone at the death of the one who previously owned the gift or held the right. So GNT92.PSA.2.8 translates “I will give you.”

Verse 9:

- a) There is an important *textual issue* that must be resolved in this verse: “The LXX reads ‘you will shepherd them.’ This reading, quoted in the Greek text of the NT in Rev 2:27; Rev 12:5; Rev 19:15, assumes a different vocalization of the consonantal Hebrew text and understands the verb as *ra’ah*, ‘to shepherd’ rather than *ra’a*, ‘to break’. But the presence of *nafats*, ‘to smash’ in the next line strongly favors the MT vocalization” (NET Note). The *Handbook on Psalms* adds: “‘break’ and ‘shatter... in pieces.’

One of the most common techniques to achieve intensification in biblical parallelism is the use of the simile in the second clause. The intensification of poetic effect is made here also by the contrast of breaking with an iron rod and the shattering of a fragile clay pot.” Check some other versions and commentaries and explain whether you agree with this conclusion, or not.

- b) What types of figurative language do we find in this verse? What is their meaning, and how does the B line intensify the A line? Do you have any difficulty conveying the imagery of this verse in YL? Explain.

Verse 10:

- a) What are the indicators that a new stanza begins in v. 10 (also note the chiasmic construction of lines A and B)?
- b) Who is the speaker of verses 10-12? Why do you think so?
- c) How can you duplicate the structural function of the initial connective expression “And now...” (וְעַתָּה) in YL?
- d) Explain how the second main verb of this verse clarifies, or specifies, the first: “be wise...be warned” (NIV) (הַשְׁכִּילִי הַנִּסְרִי). Is there a way of indicating in YL that this is a serious warning? If so, tell how (Chewa suggests this by the word order in the vocative phrases).

Verse 11:

- a) What type of “serving” (עֲבָד) and what sort of “fear” (יִרְאָה) is being referred to in line A?
- b) The second line of v. 11 is difficult to understand in Hebrew. The NET note explains: Traditionally, “rejoice with trembling” (KJV). The verb גִּיל (gil) normally means “rejoice,”

but this meaning does not fit well here in conjunction with “in trembling.” Some try to understand “trembling” (and the parallel יִרְאַה, *yir’ah*, “fear”) in the sense of “reverential awe” and then take the verbs “serve” and “rejoice” in the sense of “worship” (cf. NASB). But רַעְדָּה (*re’adah*, “trembling”) and its related terms consistently refer to utter terror and fear (see Ex 15:15; Job 4:14; Ps 48:6; Ps 55:5; Ps 104:32; Is 33:14; Da 10:11) or at least great emotional distress (Ezr 10:9).

It seems more likely here that גִּיל carries its polarized meaning “mourn, lament,” as in Ho 10:5. “Mourn, lament” would then be metonymic in this context for “repent” (referring to one’s rebellious ways)... — Compare this explanation with several other versions and commentaries; then give your conclusion as to how you will translate this B line in YL. What difficulty would you have in rendering the NIV’s “rejoice with trembling”?

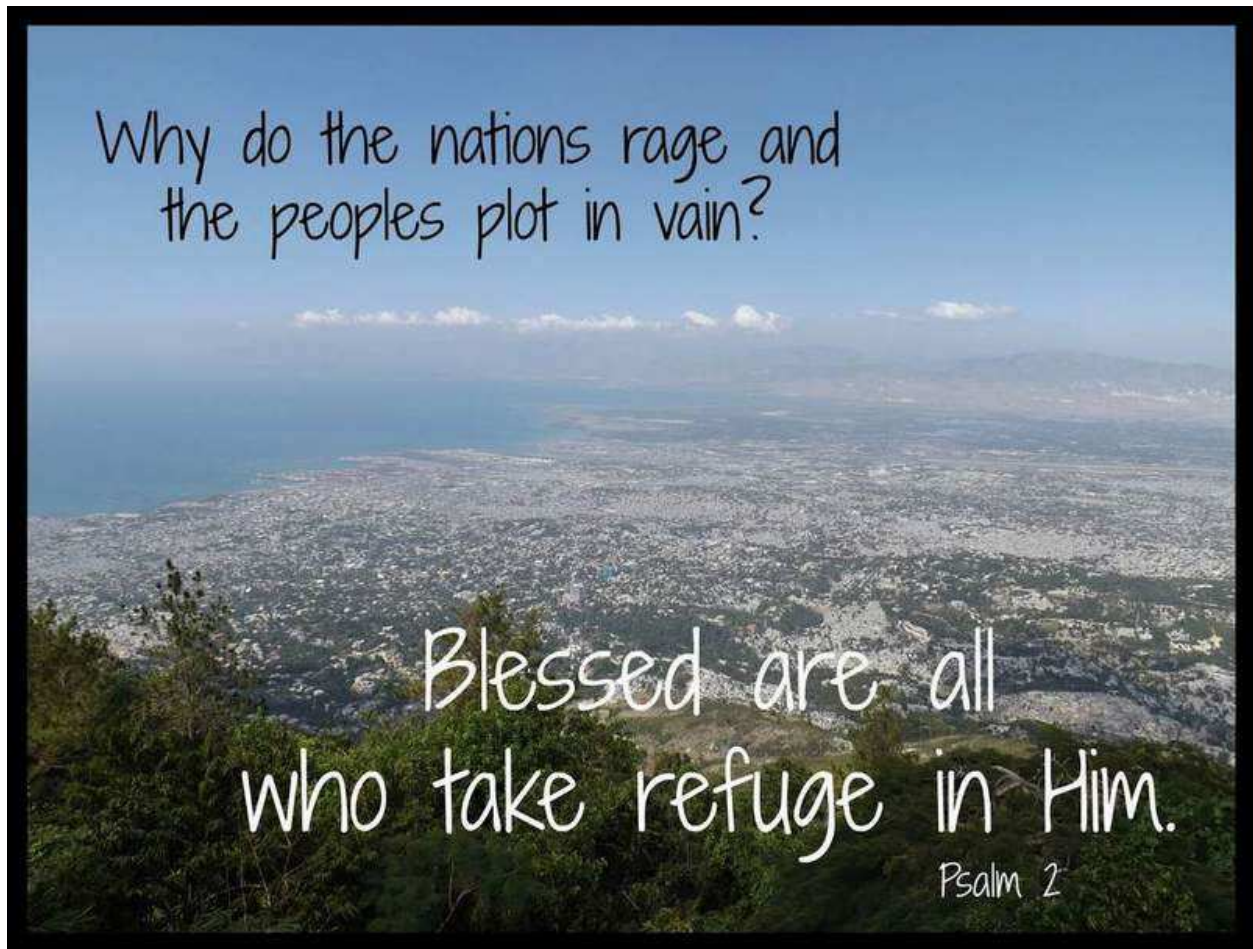
Verse 12:

- a) There is another difficult exegetical problem in line A of this verse. The NET note explains: Traditionally, “kiss the son” (KJV). But בָּר (bar) is the Aramaic word for “son,” not the Hebrew. For this reason many regard the reading as suspect. Some propose emendations of vv. 11-12. One of the more popular proposals is to read ... “in trembling kiss his feet”. It makes better sense to understand בָּר as an adjective meaning “pure” (see Ps 24:4; Ps 73:1 and BDB 141 s.v. בָּר 3) functioning here in an adverbial sense. If read this way, then the syntactical structure of exhortation (imperative followed by adverbial modifier) corresponds to the two preceding lines (see v. 11). The verb נָשַׁק (*nashaq*, “kiss”) refers metonymically to showing homage (see 1Sa 10:1; Ho 13:2). The exhortation in v. 12 advocates a genuine expression of allegiance and warns against insincerity. When swearing allegiance, vassal kings would sometimes do so insincerely, with the intent of rebelling when the time was right.

The so-called “Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon” also warn against such an attitude. In this treaty the vassal is told: “If you, as you stand on the soil where this oath [is sworn], swear the oath with your words and lips [only], do not swear with your entire heart, do not transmit it to your sons who will live after this treaty, if you take this curse upon yourselves but do not plan to keep the treaty of Esarhaddon...may your sons and grandsons because of this fear in the future” (see J. B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East*, 2:62).

The *Handbook on Psalms* concludes: “Until more light is shed on the subject, the translator’s best course is to follow one of the standard translations. However, a literal translation of ‘kiss his feet’ in many languages will be misleading. It is therefore preferable in such cases to use a nonfigurative expression such as ‘bow down to him’, or the appropriate physical gesture for doing obeisance before a high-ranking person, such as ‘stoop before him’, ‘lower the head before him’, or ‘crouch in front of him’.” — Compare this explanation with several other versions and commentaries; then give your conclusion as to how you will translate this A line in YL. What difficulty would you have in rendering the NIV’s “Kiss the Son lest he be *angry*”?

- b) What does the expression in line B “lest...you perish in your way” (פֶּן... תֵּאבְדוּ בְדַרְכְּךָ) mean—and how will you translate this?
- c) How does line C connect with the preceding content: “when his anger quickly burns” (כִּי-יִבְעַר בְּמַהֲרָא אָפּוֹ)? How will you clarify this in your translation?
- d) Why does the last line of this psalm (D) sound out of place? Compare with Psalm 1:1 and then suggest a possible explanation for its presence here (cf. also 1:6).
- e) How do you express the concept of being “blessed” (אַשְׁרֵי)?
- f) What does it mean to “take refuge in” (חָסֶה) someone? Note the comment in the *Handbook on Psalms*: “Take refuge in him translates a verb which appears some twenty-four times in Psalms and is always used with God as the protector. The expression take refuge in him must often be recast as a verbal phrase with the meaning of ‘covering’, ‘caring for’, or ‘helping’. The last line may sometimes be rendered, for example, ‘But how happy are the people God takes care of’ or ‘But how fortunate are the people God helps.’” Do you have a figurative way of expressing this in YL? If so, tell what this is.



(<http://coorparoo.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Psalm-2-800.jpg>)

7. Theological reflection on Psalm 2

Psalm 2 does little to contradict the common stereotype that "the God of the Old Testament" is a deity overflowing with wrath. The poem uses a variety of synonyms to refer to God's anger, wrath, or fury (verses 5, 12). It employs a violent image of God's chosen king using an iron rod to break the nations, which then shatter into bits like an ordinary piece of pottery (verse 9). The psalmist even offers a glimpse of God seated in the heavens, laughing scornfully and inspiring terror in the world's rulers below (verses 4-5).

Yet, the psalmist does not present God's rage as unprovoked. The psalm begins with a rhetorical question that invites the audience's incredulity. Why must the nations continue to conspire against the Lord and against the Lord's anointed one, the Israelite king? How could the nations - even all nations joined as one force -- imagine they could overpower the sovereign God of Israel and the earthly ruler whom he has appointed? It is this hubris that inspires mockery by God and

by us, the readers, drawn in by the psalmist's rhetoric. God scoffs at the efforts of the most powerful leaders on earth; their conspiracies are but a joke to God. Their plans are thwarted before they are even formulated.

The behavior of the nations -- then and now -- is terror and violence. Their fury incites God's fury. In response to their conspiracies, their plots, their war plans, God unleashes wrath. Swirling anger is not, however, the only experience of God articulated in the psalm. The anointed one, the king, testifies to God's claim on his life: "He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you'" (verse 7). In addition to evoking a familial tenderness that stands in stark contrast to the international antagonism prominent in the psalm, this claim of parentage is also a legal claim. As Yahweh's son, the king is Yahweh's legal heir. The inheritance is no small parcel of land, but rather "the nations," even to the "ends of the earth" (verse 8).

Psalm 2 draws connections between Israelite kingship and God's cosmic kingship and, therefore, is classified as a royal psalm. As William Brown explains, royal psalms create "an indissoluble link between King and king. [...] God's sovereign rule is made manifest through the earthly king (2:7-12)."¹ That link is drawn in this psalm through the parental metaphor. Thus, as God's heir, the king becomes the one who wields the iron rod that destroys the conspiratorial nations. The Israelite king is the instrument of God's power in the world.

At verse 10, the psalmist shifts his address to the very kings and rulers he has mocked at the beginning of the poem. Though they have provoked God's wrath, anger need not be the nations' only experience of God. They have the opportunity to orient their posture away from the service of their own power and toward the service of Yahweh (verses 11-12a). Without that change in orientation, God's anger inevitably will flare, and the nations will indeed perish.

The last line of Psalm 2, "Happy are all who take refuge in him," echoes the initial words of Psalm 1, "Happy are those...." This repetition brackets Psalms 1 and 2 together, and the unit serves to introduce the book of Psalms as a whole. However, the line also provides a fitting conclusion to Psalm 2 on its own. The last image of God provided by the psalm is not an angry God prepared to destroy the nations, but rather God as refuge, a place of quiet and safety in the midst of the world's raging. The description here resonates with Psalm 46, where the language of God as refuge is woven throughout that psalm. Perhaps most evocative of Psalm 2 is Psalm 46:6-7: "The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice; the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." The violence of the world, brought on by the hubris of the nations, will continue. Nonetheless, God provides protection from the uproar that

rages in the earth. Even as God wreaks havoc on those who oppose him, God provides a refuge for those who serve him.

The references in Psalm 2 to God's "anointed one" (Hebrew *mashiah*, "messiah") refer quite concretely to the earthly Davidic monarch ruling over Israel. The New Testament later adopts this same language of God's anointed one, or messiah, to describe Jesus. The language of Jesus as Son of God, also a favorite term in the New Testament, similarly echoes the parental metaphor used of Yahweh and the Davidic king in this psalm. At the Transfiguration of Jesus, read from Matthew 17:1-9 with this week's lectionary, the voice from the cloud invokes this same parent-child relationship, declaring, "This is my Son, the Beloved" (Matthew 16:5). Thus it is clear that the "God of the Old Testament" and the images used to describe God there -- be they furious and wrathful or tender and parental -- persist in the New Testament as well. Indeed, the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are one and the same. The powers of this world continue in their conspiratorial fervor, while God -- the one God, sovereign over the earth -- remains our refuge.

Psalm 2 provides critical background for understanding both what it means and what it meant to recognize Jesus as messiah (i.e., the Christ) and Lord. In Matthew 17:1-9, the gospel reading in the church year for the Sunday of the Transfiguration of our Lord, the disciples catch a glimpse of the glory and power of the Jesus. Jesus' special status as king and divine son are suddenly revealed, but only for a moment and only to select few. Given the expectations that attended the office of kingship, Jesus' true identity as messiah would surely be misinterpreted.

Indeed, throughout the New Testament, the kingship of the Christ defies expectation. Jesus' power outstrips that of any king, ancient or modern. However it comes not through military might but through emptying himself of power -- through suffering, humiliation, despair, even the death of criminal.

When we read Psalm 2 on this particular Sunday, we hear its theme first articulated in its ancient Judean context and then reinterpreted in the New Testament context, in light of the reign of Christ. In our own time, the message resonates as well. We feel the psalm's fundamental tension as to whether the world is actually under God's ultimate control (verses 1-3) or whether God's order has yet to be realized fully (verses 10-11). Yet we also hear God's clear response to the chaos and strife that fill the earth. God's word to the word comes through one man, the anointed king, God's son: "Blessed are all of those who take refuge in him" (verse 11).

¹ William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 188.

Cameron B.R. Howard (https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=846)

Joel LeMon (https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2044)



(Beginning of Psalm 2, in Musée Condé, ms.65, f.45v. David miniature represented thanking God that appears in a halo. Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=108884>)