Sounds, Words and Meanings in Psalm 82
Lowell K. Handy
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What is This?
Several major studies in this century have attempted to deal with the date\(^1\) and meaning\(^2\) of Psalm 82, but relatively few attempts have been made to understand the skill of the author in constructing the poem.\(^3\) The central concern of this study is the use made by the poet of a vocabulary chosen not only for its meaning, but also for sounds used to create patterns within the poem. The poet’s play on words includes the use both of sound imagery reinforced by repetition and words of multiple meanings.\(^4\)

For this presentation Psalm 82 is divided into five distinct units marked by their own sound patterns and individual structures. Several repeated sounds and words have been used to interconnect the sections, uniting the psalm as a whole. These units, divided and numbered for this study, read in translation:\(^5\)

\begin{tabular}{ll}
I & 1 God stands up \\
  & 2 In the assembly of El \\
  & 3 In the midst of the gods he judges: \\
II & 1 How long will you rule unjustly? \\
  & 2 And honor the wicked? \\
  & 3 Judge the lowly and the fatherless! \\
  & 4 Do justice for the needy and the poor! \\
  & 5 Rescue the lowly and oppressed! \\
  & 6 From the hand of the wicked, rescue! \\
III & 1 They do not know \\
  & 2 And they do not understand; \\
  & 3 In darkness they wander around; \\
  & 4 All the foundations of the earth totter! \\
IV & 1 I, I say: \\
\end{tabular}
You (are) gods
And sons of the Highest (are) all of you,
Nevertheless, you will die like a man
And like one of the leaders you will fall!

V
Arise God!
Rule the earth!
For you possess
All the nations!

Each section will be analyzed as to A. repeated sounds, B. use of word play within the unit and in the larger poem, and C. use of words with multiple meanings. In addition, an understanding of the poem will be proposed which makes use of the word play of the psalmist.

Section I

1 *lōhîm nîṣāb
2 ba-a{dat-ēl
3 b'qereb *lōhîm yiṣpōt

A. Sound Patterns
The dominant element here is the repetition of ‘ēl’ in each line. The first and last lines contain the long form *lōhîm, the central line the short form ‘ēl. The two long forms bracket the short form and simultaneously provide the limits of this poetic section.

The second and third lines are paralleled by the sound of the two two-syllable words in construct with ‘ēl and *lōhîm, each prefaced with the hard ‘b’. The two verbs of the section end lines one and three with incomplete sound parallels, sharing a short ‘i’ before a sibilant. The elements of sound pattern in section one are thus:6

1 *lōhîm -iš-
2 b- ‘ēl
3 b- *lōhîm -iš-

B. Word Play
The verb ns{ means ‘to arise’ or ‘to stand up’;7 it will be paralleled in meaning in the final section of the psalm with the verb qwm, which may have a specific meaning beyond that of arising; the choice of term leaves a certain ambiguity in v. 1 about the intent of the deity (an ambiguity also conveyed in the use of špt, discussed below).
C. Multiple Meanings

The first and last words of this section owe their prominent positions to the structural importance they have within the psalm as a whole. Each of the words has two meanings in the poem and all possible combinations of the four meanings are to be utilized.

It is possible, also, that all three of the 'el' words carry different meanings in this section. It has generally been agreed that the two uses of 'elohîm represent two distinct meanings of that word. The first refers to the god of Judah, which has led to a common suggestion that the first 'elohîm should have been yhwh. But, reading the text as it stands, we note that the first 'elohîm must be a single deity since singular verbs are used with it, whereas the 'elohîm which appears in the third line certainly means 'gods', being the parallel to 'dat 'el.

Given that there were in classical Hebrew various ways to refer to both Yahweh and the gods, it may be inferred that the poet has intentionally chosen to use the same word for both.

The 'el of the second line must be taken as part of the word play on 'elohîm. This 'el could be a reference to a deity, either the god of the first line or El, head of the Syro-Palestinian pantheon; or, again, 'el may function here as part of a stock expression, meaning no more than 'divine' as used with 'divine assembly'. The range of meanings for 'el allows it to be set between the two uses of 'elohîm in the section and be related to both.

The špt has also been emphasized by the poet. Rhythmically it disrupts the two-beat pattern of the section. Like 'elohîm, it also has been chosen by the author for its double meaning. Generally, commentators fail to recognize the importance of špt in the psalm since there has been a tendency to translate the word consistently, even when this proves difficult. The poet has used both the general meaning 'to rule' and the specific meaning 'to judge' in the psalm. As the reader ends section I with this word, however, the exact connotation of the verb, as it appears in line three, remains unclear; it is only after the completion of the psalm as a whole that it becomes clear that section one is God judging the gods. Both nṣb and špt, then, remain ambiguous until the remainder of the poem defines their connotation. The author presents an opening scene in which one god rises in a council of many gods, but whether to rule or to judge is left unclear. This scene represents the Syro-Palestinian heavenly council, where one deity was overseer of the many deities who were responsible for their own areas of divine control; the single 'elohîm in
this psalm is the former, the plural *lōhîm* the latter. The ambiguous nature of the two verbs and of the use of *lōhîm*, while they convey a normal picture of the divine assembly also allow for the subsequent dramatic deconstruction of the conventional order.

**Section II**

1. **A. Sound Patterns**

The sound patterns of section II have been more carefully investigated than in any other section of the poem, no doubt because they are more evident here. The first line is a transitional line which does not conform to the sound patterns of either Section I or the rest of section II, though it contains the verb špt, also found in both sections. The line clearly belongs to section II since it forms a parallel with the second line. It also features the long ‘u’ prominent in the sound structure of sections II-IV, the speech of God.

Lines 2-6 are united by a series of repeated words and sounds; each line consists of three words, the central words of each line forming a definite series:

2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 

Like the series *lōhîm* / ‘êl / *lōhîm* in the first section, two long words surround a similar-sounding short word: *rša‘îm* / rāš / *rša‘îm*. This pattern is completed by two *dals* in the center of lines three and five.

Pattern is evident also in the first words of each line. Two-syllable words made of a prefix and a single-syllable word of human anatomy stand before both *rša‘îm* words, while verbal forms incorporating ‘p’ and ‘t’ elements and ending in long ‘u’ stand before each *dal*.

As to the last word in each line: the second, fourth, and sixth lines
all end in verbs containing sibilants as the second consonantal element, and terminating in long ‘u’. This long ‘u’ appears in all six lines of this section and in lines 2-6 is integrated with the rs / dl pattern. Finally, lines 3 and 5 conclude with nouns prefaced by waw and ending in long ‘o’ with respectively ‘m’ and ‘n’. The cumulative effect of all these patterns is a fifteen word block of poetry with a distinct sound pattern:

1  - - špštû -
2  - ršā’îm -štû
3  -ptû dal wž-ûm
4  - -răš -š-û
5  p-tû dal wž-ûn
6  - ršā’îm -š-û

B. Word Play

The selâ which appears at the end of line 2 marks the end of the paralleled question opening the address of God to the deities. While the two questions are parallel in meaning, the second line conforms structurally with the sounds of lines 2-6 and not with line 1. The ‘āwel of line 1 parallels the ršā’îm of line 2; these words provide the evil connotation for the actions God attributes to the gods. The term ršā’îm holds the entire section together by also forming the first central word of the five-line sound pattern. The ršā’îpîm of lines 2 and 6 frame the commands made by God to the gods; the first tells what the gods have been doing, the last what they should be doing.

The words in construct with the two ršā’îms also unify the section. The parts of the human anatomy found here are single-syllable words with prefixes. Both have taken on symbolic connotations in their relationship with ršā’îm. The former now connotes the honor of the wicked, the latter their power. The section begins by asking why the gods support these wicked and ends by demanding that they cease doing so.

The ‘dni which begins line 4 has a different structural function. It forms a sound parallel to the ‘anî which will begin section IV, a word which itself is strictly unnecessary for the meaning. At the same time, ‘anî forms part of a series of six words used for the powerless. Lines 3-5 are each made up of two such words plus an imperative verb. The double dal and the central răš hold the section together
while paralleling the meanings of yātōm, ānī, and ‘ebyōn. Again, an overlapping and complementary set of structures has emerged.

C. Multiple Meanings
The transitional line 1 forms a bridge between the first section and the second by repeating špt, appearing in section I, but now with the meaning ‘rule’. In the reading of section II the meaning ‘judge’ becomes clear for the špt of section I, for section II is God’s condemnation of these deities for their improper rule of the cosmos. In this way, špt is used to contrast the two meanings of *lōhîm: God judges the gods who rule. In the course of the psalm the meanings of špt will be reversed with regard to each *lōhîm.

In the third line of this section špt appears as an imperative verb spoken by God to the gods. The verb is parallel with šdq and plt; all three words refer to aspects of ruling which uphold the powerless of society. Therefore, špt here means ‘to judge’ in the sense of defending the underprivileged. (The cycle of the poet’s use of špt is completed in the final section of the poem.)

Section III

1 lō’ yādē’ū
2 welō, yâbînū
3 baḥśēkâ yithallâkû
4 yimmôṭû kol-môs’dê ‘âreṣ

A. Sound Patterns
The long ‘u’ sounds, which sustain the entire speech of God, appear in each line. Here they are not the second person plural imperative endings of section II, but third person plural indicatives. The long ‘u’, ends the first three lines, reinforcing their parallelism in structure and meaning. The fourth line shifts the long ‘u’ to the first word and serves to signal the end of this section. The whole section is held together in that the first three lines parallel each other in their meaning, while the third and fourth lines contain the same number of syllables, which emphasizes the relation of the former lines with the chaos described in the final.

The first two lines are close parallels in both sense and sound, repeating the initial lō’ and following these with third person verbal forms. The verbs repeat the sounds ‘yā’ and ‘ū’ in three-syllable words,
only the second syllables differing. A further sound pattern consists in the consonants ‘l’ and ‘k’ and the vowel ‘o’. The ‘l’ and ‘o’ sounds of the word lô’ reappear in lines 3 and 4. The ‘l’ occurs near the end of line 3 and in the middle of the fourth line. In the third line the ‘k’ sound (which will be repeated throughout the remainder of the poem) is introduced, and the sounds of ‘k’, ‘o’ and ‘l’ combine in the word kol of the fourth line; this word occurs in each of the final three sections of the psalm. (A minor but effective assonance is also the mô of line 4.) The sound construction of section III is thus as follows:

1  lô’ yâ-û
2  -lô’ yâ-û
3  -k- -ll-kû
4  -mô-û kol-mô- -

B. Word Play
The parallelism of the first two lines is extended in the third where the author uses a slightly different manner of saying what the first two lines have said; ‘darkness’ is used to parallel the negatives (lô’) in the previous lines. In all three lines verbs of order are negated (to know, to understand, to walk) in order to describe elements of the chaotic state of the world. The fourth line restates, but positively, what has just been said; the entire earth is in chaos. All four lines of this section parallel each other in meaning. They represent the chaos into which the gods’ rule has led the earth.

The fourth line introduces two words which will be used again in the psalm. The first of these is the word kol-, which here denotes the totality of the chaos into which the rule of many gods has led the universe. The other word is ‘ire+, which, having two meanings in the poem, is discussed immediately below.

C. Multiple Meanings
As the final word of the section, ‘äreš is emphasized, as was špt in section I. Here ‘äreš is used for the physical earth. The shaking of the foundational pillars is meant to portray the chaos on a cosmic scale. In this it is a parallel to the three preceding lines, though a much intensified rendition of the thought. While ‘äreš is used here for the entity ‘earth’, the shaking of the physical earth is obviously symbolical of cosmic chaos. The gods have created chaos and not order. This is the very opposite of what a divine hierarchy is supposed to insure. The cosmos risks collapsing into total ruin.
Section IV

A. Sound Patterns
Section IV also begins with a transitional line which at the same time connects the section to the section II, by use of the ‘ānī / ānī parallel sound, and also contains internal sound repetition. In addition, it introduces the recurring ‘a’ vowel of this section. As did section III immediately before it, section IV begins with two short lines and then shifts to longer ones. The two word line consists of words made up of successions of ‘a’, liquid (m/n), and a final long ‘i’. These liquids will continue through line four.

The words *lōhīm and ‘elyōn both contain the ‘el’ element, a long ‘o’ following, and end with a liquid. Their respective lines end in the ‘em’ of the second person plural pronoun. The third line introduces a rapid succession of ‘k’ sounds which extend through line 4 and into the beginning of line 5. Lines 4 and 5 repeat a series of ‘a’ sounds, which, along with the long ‘u’ common to the central three sections, help to hold the series of lines together. The nun at the end of the fourth line is to be understood as a nasalization used to separate the long ‘u’ sounds at the end of line four and the beginning of line five. The extensive sound repetition of this section appears as follows:

1 ānī ‘āma-i
2 *lōhīm -em
3 ū-n- ‘elyōn ku-kem
4 ‘ākēn k-ā-ām t-ū-ū
5 ūk-ā-a- -a-ā-m t-ū

B. Word Play
The first two lines of this section parallel each other in length, while lines 2 and 3 are parallel in meaning. *lōhīm is paralleled by ūbēnē ‘elyōn, this pattern of a single word paralleled by a double-word phrase being repeated in lines 4 and 5 where ke’ādām has been paralleled with ukē’āhād haśšārīm. In the central portion of the section, the divine address of lines 2-5, each line is slightly longer
than the one preceding it, by syllable count. Both the parallelisms and the line lengths denote a lengthening tendency (which contrasts with the sense, in which the *lōhîm have their lifespans shortened!).

The final words of each line of the address fulfill the parallelism of the poem. The pronoun *attem has been expanded into the inclusive kulîkem. This latter form succeed in repeating the pronoun in different words and in bringing the notion of totality into the address. The kol- of section III is related to this totality; it is precisely because *all the deities have acted with incompetence that *all the foundations of the earth are on the verge of collapse. It may also be pointed out that the added syllable in the final word of line 3 creates two parallels from shorter to longer renditions between lines 2 and 3. The verbs mut and npl which provide the final words of lines 4 and 5 also are parallels. Here npl is used in a symbolic sense referring to falling dead.

The connection word of this address, *ākên, not only prefaces the utterance of the harsh sentence upon this assembly, but provides a continuous stream of guttural sounds which connect the two halves of the quotation: kulîkem *ākên kē*ādām. Its presence here implies that the pair of statements just made, to the effect that the listeners are gods, is about to be radically abridged.

C. Multiple Meanings
As in section I, the plural gods are referred to once with *lōhîm and once with a construct comprised of a word which may mean a single deity (*elyôn). This creates an intertwined, interconnected construction which highlights the poet’s play upon God and the gods. In the same manner, the twice named gods are balanced by the twice named humans. The pivotal word in this section is the *ādām of line 4. After being told that they are gods, the assembly is informed that it is like humans. The word *ādām is carrying two meanings at this point in the poem. In what must be seen as a modified form of what Watson has called the ‘Janus parallelism’,15 *ādām means ‘mortal’ in its contrast with the gods of the previous two lines; at the same time, it carries the sense of an individual human being to parallel *aḥad haššârîm in the line following.16 The first parallel/contrast intends to emphasize the difference between immortality and mortality. The second, more familiar construction, simply reflects that individuals die.

Section IV concludes the speech by God. The gods rule the cosmos
as humans rule the earth; the single major difference is that human rulers always die while the gods only die sometimes. Now all the gods are to die just as humans do. The declaration that God had called them gods reflects the understanding that the deities were established in their divine stations by the ultimate authority in the cosmos.

Section V

A. Sound Patterns
Like the first section, section V is not a part of the address made by God to the gods; and like section I also, takes place in an assembly, now one of human singers. These four lines bring the poem to a close while incorporating vocabulary from each of the prior sections: *lōhīm, špē, 'eres, and kol- all appear in this short last section. The entire poem is thus unified by the sounds of these words.

The dominating vowel in this section is the long 'a' which concludes the first major word in each of the first three lines. The vowel sound also appears twice in the word ha'āres in line 2. The first, third and last lines begin with the sounds of 'q', 'k' and 'k' respectively. This final section has been bracketed by the final words of lines 1 and 4 which provide the parallel sounds ʾōhim and ʾoyim. It is worth noting that the long 'u' sound, which is so dominant throughout the entire speech by God in sections II-IV, appears once, in the first syllable of section IV, and then disappears. The use of sound patterns in the last section is thus:

1  qāmā *lōhīm
2  šōbātā hāʾāres
3  kī-ʾāṭtā tinhal
4  bēkol haggōyim

B. Word Play
The first two lines are imperatives directed by the hymnist to the single deity. This *lōhīm is a return to the first *lōhīm of the psalm;
the singular imperatives make this clear. Both verbs are commands for the deity to rule the earth without mediation by other gods. The first of these verbs (qwm) means 'to arise' and appears to have been selected to parallel nsb of the first line of the psalm; each verb occurs in a line where *lōhim is the sole other word. Indeed, the first lines of sections I and V have become reversed parallels of a sort, represented by the reversal of the position of *lōhim. Both lines refer to the rising up of God, yet while the first section's nsb at first conveys no connotation beyond the standing up, it might be intended to contrast with section V's qwm, which may at times convey the sense of 'being established in power' (e.g. in the piel form) which apparently is the intention of the author of this poem. The deity is not being asked to stand up in the assembly to make an address, but here is being asked to take direct control of the cosmos and rectify the chaotic universe.

The pronoun 'attā has been used to refer to God in line 3. This 'attā is used for the same character as the *ni of the first line of section IV. Neither pronoun is necessary for clarity; in each case a fully conjugated verb carries the person and number of the subject. Therefore, these pronouns serve to distinguish between the gods and the one God. Just as God had addressed the gods in section I, and 'ani had addressed 'attem' in section IV, now the reciters of the psalm address God directly with 'attā. The pronouns also serve to add 'a' sounds to the poetry.

The poetic device of paralleling one word with a two-word phrase reappears in this final section. The 'āres of line two has been paralleled with kol-haggōyim in the fourth line. To say that God rules the earth and that all the nations belong to God is to say the same thing. The rule of the gods, which led to chaos, is now to be in the sole care of God from whom harmony is to be expected.

In the final line of the poem kol- appears for the third time in the work. In sections III and IV kol- had made clear the totality of the danger in which the universe stood when being governed by all the various deities. With the final statement of the poem kol- again refers to totality, but now it is the totality of God's rule. Everything is to be under Yahweh's direct care—to the reassurance of the hearers of the psalm.

C. Multiple Meanings
The singular imperatives show that the *lōhim of the first line is once
again the *lōhîm of the first line of the psalm. The second of these imperatives is špî. In this section the conjunction of *lōhîm and špî is finally repeated. Here the verb means ‘rule’. At first God judged the gods who ruled; then the gods were upbraided to judge properly; and finally God is urged to rule.

That which God is to rule is mentioned twice. First the poet uses 'āreṣ, referring in this instance to the peoples of the world which God is now to govern; the word was first used in the poem in section III where it meant the physical earth. The parallel construction in this section with kol-haggôyim clearly designates the aspect of the word connoting ‘humanity as a whole’.

**Conclusion**

Psalm 82 has been carefully constructed in several respects. Not only has the poet made use of the more commonly studied poetic device of parallelism, but he has used this poetic style in a variety of ways. Both meaning and sound of words have been made use of in constructing parallel poetic forms. The poem reflects a fondness on the part of the author for paralleling a single word with a two-word phrase.

The selection of words for the poem has been careful throughout. Not only within sections but among them the meanings and sounds of the vocabulary have been used to construct patterns and repetitions. This also has included the use of words with more than one meaning used intentionally for the multiple meanings; such usage, of course, also gives a series of repeated sounds.

The poet has created forms of sound and meaning within each section of the poem; each section has itself been used to create a chiastic structure for the psalm. The first and last sections take place in assemblies in which God rises and performs acts called špî. These two sections bracket the address of God to the deities. Sections II and IV are, in fact, the direct address of God to the gods in which first the gods’ rule of the cosmos is shown to have been corrupt, while in the latter section the gods are sentenced to mortality for their incompetence. The center of the chiastic formation, section III, is God’s description of the chaos into which the cosmos has fallen due to the inept rule of these divine rulers. Thus, it would appear that the poet has used the parallel structures even in the construction of the psalm’s sectional units.
In approaching Psalm 82 it has been necessary to take into account several forms of parallelism, including that of discernible sectional units defined by sound patterns and content. The poem has been constructed with an ear to the sound of the vocabulary and the multiple meanings of repeated words. In addition, symbolic meanings for the vocabulary used have had to be acknowledged. All of these various devices of the poet need to be considered when attempting to understand this psalm. It may be inferred that such consideration will need to be taken with regard to other Hebrew poetry as well.

ABSTRACT

In the composition of Psalm 82 the poet extensively used the sounds of its vocabulary to aid in structuring the poem. In addition, words having multiple meanings have been used to create a poem of distinct parts simultaneously united by repeated words and sounds. Acknowledging the word play of the author is necessary for understanding the meaning of the psalm. Psalm 82 is made up of five distinct sections, identifiable by their unique sound patterns, which form a chiastic poetic unit.

NOTES

1. The date of composition for Psalm 82 has been set as early as the premonarchic period and as late as the Hellenistic era; see respectively J.S. Ackerman, 'An Exegetical Study of Psalm 82' (Th.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1966), pp. 71, 491; and M. Buttenwieser, The Psalms Chronologically Treated with a New Translation (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1938), p. 764. Given the content of the poem, the shift from cosmic rule by pantheon to rule by a single deity, Josiah's reform would appear to be a reasonable time for the composition; an argument for this date may be found in L.K. Handy, 'A Realignment in Heaven: An Investigation into the Ideology of the Josianic Reform' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1987), pp. 341-53. On the religious shift reflected in the poem, see H. Gordon, 'History of Religion in Psalm 82', Biblical and Near Eastern Studies, ed. Gary A. Tuttle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 129-31.

2. The major studies have been: J. Morgenstern, 'The Mythological Background of Psalm 82', HUCA 14 (1939), pp. 29-126; G.E. Wright, The
Old Testament against its Environment (SBT 2; London: SCM, 1950), pp. 30-41; Ackerman’s dissertation cited in note 1 above; H.-W. Jüngling, Der Tod der Götter: Eine Untersuchung zu Psalm 82 (SBS 38; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969); and M. Tsevat, ‘God and the Gods in Assembly, an Interpretation of Psalm 82’, HUCA 40/41 (1969-70), pp. 123-37. The present study owes much of its understanding of the psalm to these studies, particularly those of Wright, Ackerman, and Jüngling.

3. Three works have explicitly addressed the poetic structures of the psalm: Tsevat’s article; W.G.E. Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques (JSOT Sup 26; Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), pp. 286-93; and L. Alonso Schökel, Treinta Salmos: Poesia y Oracion (2nd edn.; Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1986), pp. 287-304. Of these, Watson’s is the most thorough treatment. Aspects of all three have been incorporated in the following investigation.

4. Watson, p. 242, states: ‘Evidently, true wordplay is not all that frequent; it took a skilled poet to exploit multiple meaning’. However, the extent to which poets used polyvalent words will remain impossible to measure as long as translators insist on using a single translation for any given root in a poem.

5. Since this is a study of Ps. 82 as it was heard, the selâ of v. 2 is not under consideration; it is a poetic notation marker and not part of the poem. For the purposes of this study a ‘line’ is a short poetic segment which, in its relation to other lines, bears sounds which form distinct patterns. The numbers for lines mentioned in this study are those in the following translation.

6. In charts used to identify poetic use of sounds, only those words, or parts of words, which are used in the sound structure of the secton will be reproduced. A dash (-) is used to signify a syllable or portion of syllable which is not a repeated sound in the section. Similar sounding consonants have been marked as to their particular letter; thus, rather than use ‘s’ for designating any sibilant, ş or š or whichever sibilant sound is used, will appear.

7. The verb nsb appears to mean only ‘to take a standing position’ and the meaning ‘to take part in the assembly’ is derived solely from some of its biblical contexts; see E. Theodore Mullen, Jr, The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature (HSMS 24; Chico: Scholars, 1980), p. 231. Attempts to expand the meaning of the verb have been based on interpretations of this psalm: Morgenstern, p. 71; Ackerman, p. 314; M. Dahood, Psalms II: 51-100 (AB 17; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), p. 269.

8. It has long been popular to change the first *lōhîm and/or the last *lōhîm in the poem to yhwh to avoid being ‘stylistically gauche’ or creating confusion (So Tsevat, p. 126). Among those who make this unwarranted
change are: H. Gunkel, *Ausgewählte Psalmen* (4th edn; Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917), pp. 111-12; H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen* (BKAT 15.2; Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960), p. 569; Ackerman, pp. 278-79; Jüngling, p. 71. Watson, p. 291, recognizes the importance of the word for the unity of the poem, but fails to note the importance of its two meanings.

9. Noted already in Gunkel, p. 112. For a summary of the gods/judges debate, see Alonso Schökel, pp. 293-301. On the translation ‘gods’, see C.H. Gordon, "LYHM in its Reputed Meaning of Rulers, Judges", *JBL* 54 (1935), pp. 139-44. Since Ackerman’s dissertation concluded that the word refers to gods (p. 491), this interpretation has been accepted almost universally; yet, see R.T. O’Callaghan, ‘A Note on the Canaanite Background of Psalm 82’, *CBQ* 15 (1953), pp. 313-14, whose argument is not convincing.

10. See, for example, Ackerman, p. 429, who has consistently translated ‘judge’, but recognizes this last use of the word must mean ‘to rule’. Usually špr is translated ‘to judge’ throughout the psalm; this is true even with Watson (p. 293), who notes the importance of the word for the poem otherwise, but does not notice the use made of its multiple meanings.

11. It is not the intent of this article to spell out the form of Syro-Palestinian pantheon ideology. It is clear that the religion of the area recognized a monarchical hierarchy in which there were various levels of ruling deities. In the divine council, the highest ruling god consulted with those deities of a lower station who acted on behalf of the highest authority; note Mullen, pp. 282-83. The religious vision of the time saw a distinct hierarchy with set levels of divine personnel (M.A. Smith, ‘Divine Travel as a Token of Divine Rank’, *UF* 16 [1984], p. 359), and this hierarchy was based on the political reality of the times in which, at least in theory, each level of authority owed proper service to a higher authority, now extended upward into the divine realm (see L.K. Handy, ‘A Solution for Many MLKM’, *UF* 20 [1988], pp. 58-59). An extensive description of this pantheon ideology as it appears in texts from Judah and the surrounding cultures has been worked out in Handy, ‘Realignment’, pp. 47-272.

12. See especially, Tsevat, p. 128 and n. 14; and Watson, p. 292.

13. Removing, or changing, one of the two dal words has been very popular: Kraus, p. 569; A. Gonzalez, ‘Le Psaume LXXXII’, *VT* 13 (1963), p. 293 n. 3; Ackerman, p. 286; Jüngling, p. 71.

14. The distinction between ‘the physical earth’ and ‘humanity as a whole’ in the word ‘āreš has been described by M.V. Fox, ‘Qohelet 1.4’, *JSOT* 40 (1988), p. 109. Here the physical earth appears; in section V ‘humanity as a whole’ will be used.

15. Watson, p. 159.

16. It has been suggested that ‘ādām could also mean ‘king’; see G.W. Ahlström, *Psalms 89: Eine Liturgie aus dem Ritual des leidenden Königs*
(Lund: Gleerup, 1959), p. 158; see also F. Maass, ‘ādām’, *TDOT* 1 (1974), p. 76, on Akk. *awīlum*. The paralleling of ‘ādām with ‘ahad hasṣārīm would in fact make good sense were this the case. Philip R. Davies in a personal communication has suggested that Frank M. Cross is returning to the position of Morgenstern (see n. 2 above), in seeing in ‘ādām a reference to Adam, the first human, and in ‘ahad hasṣārīm a reference to ‘fallen angels’; on the latter, at least, see B. Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (HSM 25; Chico: Scholars, 1981), pp. 64, 297 n. 130. However, even should Adam be taken as the referent of ‘ādām in this verse, it appears that the text would still refer to the king; see M. Ottosson, ‘Eden and the Land of Promise’, *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986*, ed. J.A. Emerton (VTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 185-86; and this would retain the normal meaning for šr (BDB, KB). For the purposes of this study, it is necessary only to note that this is a paralleled poetic pair which is used as a punishment for the errant deities.


18. That the gods who controlled the cosmos were appointed by the gods of highest authority may be seen in the myths from Ugarit, where El and Asherah (as King and Queen Mother) select and appoint deities to their positions (*KTU* 1.6.I.43-46). Note that Asherah selects the candidate for the divine office at El’s command and then El establishes the deity in its position. Something of this same process may be seen in the empowering of the Satan in Job 1-2. What the highest authority empowers it may also remove from power (see *KTU* 1.2.III.17-18 or 1.6.VI.22-29). The reason for removal in these instances are, interestingly, improper behavior by the gods.

19. Jüngling, p. 103, correctly notes the shift and the new location.