

De Gruyter

Chapter Title: Moments of Joy and Lasting Happiness

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Book Title: Ancient Jewish Prayers and Emotions

Book Subtitle: Emotions associated with Jewish prayer in and around the Second Temple period

Book Editor(s): Stefan C. Reif and Renate Egger-Wenzel

Published by: De Gruyter

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbkjtvk.4>

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Christine Abart

Moments of Joy and Lasting Happiness

Examples from the Psalms

1 Introduction

Are you happy? Many people would classify their well-being at a high level.¹ On the other hand, more and more people who live in rich countries suffer from depression or burn-out. What then is lacking on our path to a happy existence and what can we ourselves contribute to our own happiness?

Today's psychological research on happiness distinguishes between moments of joy (*fortuna/εὐτυχία*) on the one hand, and being happy, in terms of a lasting happiness (*beatitudo, felicitas/εὐδαιμονία*) on the other. People who are permanently happy are, according to the Greek definition, filled with a good spirit (*εὐδαιμονία*). Because of this, they are capable of rejoicing in positive events and of enduring difficulties in a confident manner.² They feel good and balanced, and enjoy an underlying gratitude for their lives, as well as a joy in their existence. Brief experiences of joy intensify their state of happiness.³ According to psychological research, a permanent state of happiness depends on a person's attitude towards him/herself and towards his or her day-to-day life. Satisfaction with life and with the quest for its meaning trigger feelings of happiness. Those, however, who have to rely on brief, barely accessible moments of joy are well on the way to becoming, or remaining, unhappy.⁴

In the following passages from the Psalms, brief experiences of joy, as well as permanent states of happiness are noted, with experiences of lasting joy exhibiting striking parallels to the permanent states of happiness mentioned above. The reason for a worshipper's joy lies in God. He makes life possible and thereby creates joy. The believers respond to this by observing his precepts. Terms such as שמח and גיל as well as descriptions of the physical expression of such feelings, allow us to recognize these emotions in written texts and, therefore, to relate to them.

1 Cf. Bucher, *Psychologie*, 33.

2 Cf. Bauer, *Glück*, 94.

3 Cf. Bauer, *Glück*, 94–95.

4 Cf. Bauer, *Glück*, 95.

My doctoral dissertation, recently completed, includes interpretations of the Psalm passages that link lexemes used for joy with physical acts.⁵ By means of three selected examples from Ps 16; 19, and 33, I hope to demonstrate the difference felt by the author between joy over momentary help and a more lasting joy. I shall begin with an interpretation of passages concerning joy over momentary strokes of luck, then move on to those that speak of permanent states of happiness. For this reason, the three passages will be interpreted in the following order: Pss 33:18–22; 16 and 19:8–11.

2 Spontaneous joy over a rescue from famine (Ps 33:18–22)

In Ps 33, the righteous, as a group, are initially called to rejoice (רָגַן; v. 1a) over YHWH. Since YHWH discomfits the nations (vv. 10–11), his own people can rejoice in their happiness (אֲשֶׁר; v. 12). But the worshippers are suffering, possibly under a king who, in contrast to YHWH's people, relies on his own strength (vv. 16–17). How they, nevertheless, as related in the next five verses, manage to show confidence and even experience joy, will now be the subject of a number of remarks.

2.1 The threatened throat (Ps 33:18–19)

But the LORD'S eyes are upon the reverent, ⁶	הִנֵּה עֵינֵי יְהוָה אֶל-יְרֵאָיו	18a
upon those who hope for his gracious help,	לְמַנְחֵלִים לְחַסְדּוֹ	18b
Delivering them/ their throat from death,	לְהַצִּיל מִמָּוֶת נַפְשָׁם	19a
keeping them alive in times of famine.	וּלְחַיֵּתָם בְּרָעָב	19b

⁵ Derivatives of שׂוּחַ appear 8x, of these seven are combined with the term “heart” (לֵב/ב; Ps 4:8; 16:9; 19:9; 33:21; 97:11; 104:15; 105:3), and once with the term “throat” (נֶפֶשׁ; Ps 86:3). Forms of רָגַן appear 9x, once in combination with the flesh (בָּשָׂר; Ps 84:3), twice with the heart (לֵב; Pss 32:11; 84:3), twice with the tongue (לָשׁוֹן; Pss 51:16; 126:2), once with the throat (נֶפֶשׁ; Ps 71:23), 3x with the voice (קוֹל; Pss 42:5; 47:2; 118:15), and twice with the lips (שִׁפְתַיִם; Pss 63:6; 71:23). The verb גִּיל appears a total of 4x, once with the liver (כְּבֹד; Ps 16:9), once with the heart (לֵב; Ps 13:6); once with the throat (נֶפֶשׁ; Ps 35:9), and once with the limbs (עַצְמוֹת; Ps 51:10). Derivatives of שׁוּשׁ appear in Ps 119:111 with the heart (לֵב) and in Ps 35:9 with the throat (נֶפֶשׁ). עָלִי appears in Ps 28:7 together with the heart (לֵב) and in Ps 94:19 with the throat (נֶפֶשׁ).

⁶ Unless otherwise stated, the translations are taken from The New American Bible (NAB).

⁷ Annotation by Ch.A.

Verses 18–19 are broadly phrased. The verbal connections with verses 20–22, however, lead to the conclusion that the worshippers are speaking of their own situation.⁸ The praying community feels that it is in mortal danger. The people wait and hope that YHWH will allow their throats (𐤛𐤓𐤏) to escape death (v. 19a)⁹ and that he will keep them alive in times of famine (NAB, however, translates “revive”, rather than “keep alive”; v. 19b). Through the 𐤛𐤓𐤏 humans take what they need in order to live. They breathe through the throat and also take in food. By the same token, their throat cries out when it is in danger and rejoices on good days.¹⁰ The worshippers in Ps 33:19 lack the necessary food. Their throat is empty. From this arises a powerful expression of need.¹¹ That is to say, the worshippers express their wish to be revived (*pi’el*).

The following illustration from Egypt shows starving nomads, who are nothing more than skin and bones. Their situation is dramatic. The woman in the bottom left-hand corner of the picture is pulling vermin out of her hair with her left hand and with her right hand raising it to her mouth.¹² At the top left-hand side of the picture, a child is stretching out its arms; it, however, receives nothing.

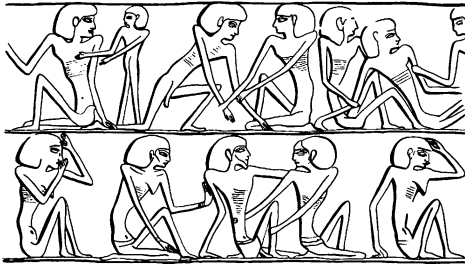


Fig. 1 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 66, 361)
Limestone relief at the staircase of
the pyramid of Unas in Saqqara,
5th Dynasty (2480–2350 BC).

Perhaps a king, such as the one described in vv. 16–17, is (co-)responsible for this famine. Rulers, who depict themselves on horseback and well-equipped,

⁸ The memory of the great danger alone can be such a burden, and it is better if it is kept either at a distance, or generalized. In this way, it remains open for new situations of hardship for the recipients of the text.

⁹ Cf. Ps 56:14.

¹⁰ 𐤛𐤓𐤏 can mean the entire throat and, therefore, also the windpipe, as well as the esophagus. It has to do with the „Sitz aller elementaren Lebensbedürfnisse“ (Frevel, *Menschsein*, 29).

¹¹ Cf. Westermann, 𐤛𐤓𐤏, 75.

¹² Cf. Keel, *Welt*, 67.

are seldom interested in the “little folk”, neither among their own people nor, even less, when they are dealing with conquered ethnic groups.¹³

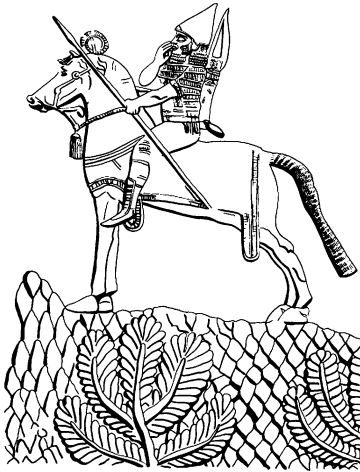


Fig. 2 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 217–218, 367)

The relief, reaching 1.29 meters and made of plaster-like alabaster, originates in Nineveh and depicts Assurbanipal (668–626 BC). The power displayed in this image is, according to Ps 33:16–17, pointless.

A king is not saved by a mighty army,	אִי־הַמֶּלֶךְ נוֹשָׁע בְּרִב־חַיִל	16a
nor a warrior delivered by great strength.	גִּבּוֹר לֹא־יִנְצֵל בְּרִב־כֹּחַ	16b
Useless is the horse for safety;	שָׁקֵר הַסּוֹס לַתְּשׁוּבָה	17a
its great strength, no sure escape.	וּבְרִב חַיִּלוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט	17b

Four negatives in vv. 16–17 deny such a king any helpful intervention. The roots of the words *ישע* (vv. 16a, 17a) and *נצל* (v. 16b) are in fact used to refer to the one who can truly save, that is, to YHWH.¹⁴

The worshippers turn to him in their mortal fear. The particle *הנה* (v. 18a) illustrates the great importance of what follows and emphasizes YHWH’s power in comparison with the aforementioned king. The worshippers look for eye con-

¹³ In Ps 33 it remains open, whether or not the king and mighty man in v. 16 belong to YHWH’s people.

¹⁴ The LORD saved Israel from the hand of the Egyptians (Exod 14:30) and from their enemies in their own land (Num 10:9; cf. Deut 20:4). In Deut 33:29 Israel is happy (*אֲשֻׁרִי*), because they are saved by the Lord (*נוֹשָׁע בְּיְהוָה*). Furthermore, in 1 Sam 14:23, 39; 1 Chr 11:14; Pss 20:7; 34:7, 19; 36:7; 37:40; 55:17; 80:20; 98:1; 107:13, 19; 116:6; Prov 20:22; Isa 25:9; 33:22; 38:20; 43:12; 45:17; Zeph 3:17; Zech 9:16 and 12:7, individuals, or all people, profess their loyalty to YHWH, their saviour. In divine speeches reported by the prophets, YHWH describes himself as the saviour of Israel (Isa 30:15; 43:12; 49:25; Jer 15:20; 30:10, 11; 31:7; 42:11; Zech 8:7 and 10:6).

tact with YHWH. His eye¹⁵ is permanently (nominal clause) upon those who fear him (אֵינָהּ; v. 18a) and who wait for (יִחַלְוּ; v. 18b) his kindness and love (חַסְדֵּךָ). Both sentences are in synonymous parallelism. Thus, it becomes clear that the worshippers experience God’s love when he looks upon them. In v. 5b the Lord is said to have filled the earth with love. In v. 5a, YHWH is described as a lover of מְשֻׁפָּט and צְדִיקָה. In v. 18, the worshippers wait for YHWH’s love and, thus, also for his judgement. Specifically, they hope for the end of their famine and their mortal fear.

2.2 Joy of the heart (Ps 33:20–22)

Our soul/throat ¹⁶ waits for the LORD,	נַפְשֵׁנוּ חָכְתָה לַיהוָה	20a
who is our help and shield.	עֲזָרְנוּ וּמִגְדָּלֵנוּ הוּא	20b
For in God our hearts rejoice;	כִּי־בֹ יִשְׂמַח לִבָּנוּ	21a
in your holy name we trust.	כִּי בְשֵׁם קֹדֶשׁוֹ בְּטַחְנוּ	21b
May your kindness, LORD, be upon us;	יְהִי־חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ	22a
we have put our hope in you.	בְּאִשֶּׁר יִחְלְנוּ לָךְ	22b

While in vv. 18–19 the statements are prefixed with “behold” and are fairly general, there is a contrast in vv. 20–22 where the worshippers are clearly speaking of themselves. In v. 20 they begin with נַפְשֵׁנוּ, thereby emphasizing their own situation in life. Their throats were, according to the common statement in v. 19a, threatened by death. However, now the worshippers are speaking about this danger in terms of the suffix conjugation. In retrospect, they now describe their earlier waiting for YHWH with the term חָכְתָה. This waiting may be interpreted as “having patience”.¹⁷ After having experienced this rescue, the modification from desperate to patient waiting is understandable.

Having been rescued, the worshippers, in v. 20b, conclude from this that YHWH is their permanent help and shield (v. 20b; nominal clause). In personal

¹⁵ The singular form “the eye of the Lord” (עֵינֵי יְהוָה) is used only in Ps 33:18. However, the eyes of the Lord (עֵינֵי יְהוָה; plural) also look favourably upon the land in Deut 11:12 and in Ps 34:16 upon the righteous.

¹⁶ Annotation by Ch.A.

¹⁷ Cf. Koehler/Baumgartner, *Lexikon* 1, 300.

prayer God is often described as a shield.¹⁸ God is also said to grasp his shield when dealing with legal disputes (Ps 35:2; 47:10).



Fig. 3 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 202, 367)

This limestone relief illustrates the traditional shields that were used at that time. The image originated during the first years of Ramses II (1301–1234 BC) in the Temple of Luxor.

The use of both terms, *עֶזְרָא* and *מִגְן*, stresses the extent of YHWH's power.¹⁹ Since the worshippers' throats (*נֶפֶשׁ*) have now been saved, their hearts (*לֵב*) rejoice (v. 21a). The heart – being the seat of the mind – has come to realize that the throat did not wait in vain for YHWH. To them, he is both, help and shield. In the wake of this realization comes the emotional reaction. The heart of the worshippers rejoices (*שָׂמַח*) over YHWH. This joy is specifically emphasized through the prefixed affirmative particles “yes” (*כִּי*). The waiting has come to an end (vv. 20a, 22b) and there is now cause for rejoicing (prefix conjugation), for YHWH has proven himself to be a lifesaver. The fear of death by starvation has passed by. The worshippers, obviously unexpectedly, have once again received food and, as was common in their day, interpret this rescue as God's help.

Joy within the heart is often described by the term *שָׂמַח*.²⁰ In the Hebrew Bible this root is used in more than half of the passages pertaining to “joy”.²¹ The majority of exegetes identify *שָׂמַח* as a static verb.²² However, Richter identifies it as a verb of “emotion” and, thus places it in the category of action

18 Cf. 2 Sam 22:3, 31; Pss 3:4; 7:11; 18:3, 31; 28:7; 33:20; 84:12; 115:9, 10, 11; 144:2 and Prov 2:7. – In concrete terms, YHWH becomes a shield for Abraham in Gen 15:1 (if this is the meaning there) and for Israel in Deut 33:29.

19 In Ps 115:9–11 YHWH is also described with both terms. In Deut 33:29 YHWH is called “shield of thy help” (*מִגְן עֶזְרָתְךָ*).

20 Cf. Pss 4:8; 16:9; 19:9; 97:11; 104:15 and 105:3.

21 Cf. Lauha, *Sprachgebrauch*, 73. – The verb *שָׂמַח* is documented a total of 158x in the Hebrew Bible. The noun *שְׂמֵחָה* appears 97x, the adjective *שְׂמֵחַ* 20x (cf. Vanoni, *שָׂמַח*, 809).

22 Cf. Vanoni, *שָׂמַח*, 811.

verbs.²³ Many individual contexts testify to a meaning of outward, intense movement.²⁴ Such a sense is often apparent in such expressions as גיל, רגן, רנן, שוש, עלץ/עלז, רוע, שחק, which are parallel to שמח. Ps 33:21a deals with spontaneous joy. The sudden mention of feeling and the use of the verb in the prefix conjugation are indicative of this. Plus, there is a concrete occasion for this positive mood. It is brought about by a moment of joy. The individual worshippers share this increasing joy with each other.²⁵

YHWH's help has made happiness possible. Having appreciated this, the worshippers speak directly to YHWH in v. 22a. In Ps 33 this occurs only here. The people make contact with YHWH and, most likely, they also show him their joy. They associate what they have experienced with his love (דֶּסֶד), which fills the earth (v. 5b). The worshippers long to feel this kindness. This desire is, as in the statement in v. 21a, described in v. 22a as a current condition in the prefix conjugation. The worshippers, in v. 18c, had already been desperately awaiting this divine devotion. They recollect this in v. 22b. However, what the worshippers experienced has made them stronger, so that they can proceed to build upon YHWH's love (v. 22a).

2.3 Summary (Ps 33:18–22)

The emotions mentioned in Ps 33:18–22 are physically expressed. In v. 18a the worshippers experience YHWH's devotion through his eyes (עֵינַי). Just as they describe themselves in a physical manner, so do they also describe YHWH. Through their eye contact with him, the people feel his closeness and from this they gain trust in him.

They describe their own situation²⁶ by way of the throat (פִּתְּוֹ), which is starving and which feels near death (v. 19). They are in mortal fear, because their throats cannot receive nourishment. This throat awaits YHWH (v. 20a). The worshippers can only await help from him alone (cf. vv. 16–17). Once YHWH has rescued them from mortal danger, their hearts (לֵב) react. The heart has the capability of recognizing YHWH's help (v. 20b) and of trusting in his holy name

²³ Cf. Richter, Grundlagen, 95–96.

²⁴ Cf. Vanoni, שְׂמֵחַ, 810.

²⁵ In vv. 19a and 20a, the heart, just like the throat, is used in the singular for the group of several worshippers. An entire people can identify themselves with this collectively conceived heart.

²⁶ Although vv. 18–19 are conceived in general terms, their context indicates a concern with the situation of the worshippers themselves.

(v. 21b). Furthermore, the heart reacts in an emotional manner; it rejoices (v. 21a). Joy suddenly comes upon them. This joy is to be understood as a reaction to the specific help that has been experienced. It concerns a moment of joy. This joy strengthens the worshippers' trust in YHWH's love and help. The briefly experienced happiness contributes to the positive mood of those affected. Such a mood, for its part, becomes apparent later, matching the instruction to the righteous, who were already called upon to shout for joy at the beginning (cf. vv. 1–3).

3 Joy replete after a rescue from mortal danger (Ps 16)

The worshipper in Psalm 16 moves from an urgent cry to God for preservation, to the blessing of the Lord (v. 7a), and then to abundant joy (v. 9a). The worshipper feels this joy within his heart and through the excitement of his liver. Owing to this positive mood, he feels that his flesh is safe (v. 9b) and, at the end of the song (v. 11b), he encounters a fullness of joy in YHWH's countenance.

A miktam of David.	מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד	1a
Keep me safe, O God; in you I take refuge.	שְׁמַרְנִי אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה בְּךָ	1b
I say to the Lord, you are my Lord,	אָמַרְתָּ לַיהוָה אֱדֹנָי אֵתְּהָ	2a
you are my only good.	טוֹבָתִי בְלִעְלֵידִךְ	2b
<i>But</i> to the saints that <i>are</i> in the earth, ²⁷	לְקַדוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בָּאָרֶץ הַמָּה	3a
and <i>to</i> the excellent, in whom <i>is</i> all my delight. ²⁸	וְאֲדִירֵי כָל־חֲפָצַיִבְכֶם	3b
They multiply their sorrows who court other gods.	יִרְבוּ עֲצוּבוֹתָם אַחַר מְהָרוּ	4a
Blood libations to them I will not pour out,	בַּל־אֶסִּיד נְסֻכֵיהֶם מִדָּם	4b
nor will I take their names upon my lips .	וּבַל־אֶשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹתֵם עַל־שִׁפְתָי	4c

²⁷ King James Version (KJV).

²⁸ King James Version (KJV).

LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,	יְהוָה מְנַת־חֶלְקִי וְכֹסִי	5a
you have made my destiny secure.	אַתָּה תּוֹמִיד גּוֹרְלִי	5b
Pleasant places were measured out for me;	חֲבָלִים נִפְלוּ-לִי בְנַעֲמִים	6a
fair to me indeed is my inheritance.	אֲף-נַחֲלַת שְׁפָרָה עָלַי	6b
I bless the LORD who counsels me;	אֲבָרֵךְ אֶת-יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲצֵנִי	7a
even at night my heart/ kidney ²⁹ exhorts me.	אֲף-לַיְלֹת יִסְרוּנִי כְּלִיֹּתַי	7b
I keep the LORD always before me;	שׂוֹיִתִּי יְהוָה לְנֶגְדֵי תָמִיד	8a
with the Lord at my right , I shall never be shaken.	כִּי מִיְמִינִי בַל-אֶמוּט	8b
Therefore my heart becomes joyful, my liver cheers, ³⁰	לְכֹן שִׂמַח לִבִּי וַיִּגַּל כְּבוֹדִי/כְּבֹדִי	9a
my body/ flesh ³¹ also dwells secure,	אֲף-בְּשָׂרִי יִשְׁכֵן לְבֶטֶח	9b
For you will not abandon me/ my throat ³² to Sheol,	כִּי לֹא-תַעֲזֹב נַפְשִׁי לְשְׂאוֹל	10a
nor let your faithful servant see the pit.	לֹא-תַתֵּן חֲסִידְךָ לְרְאוֹת שְׁחַת	10b
You will show me the path to life,	תּוֹדִיעֵנִי אֶרֶח חַיִּים	11a
abounding joy in your presence/ face , ³³	שִׁבְעַ שְׂמֵחוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ	11b
the delights at your right hand forever.	נַעֲמוֹת בְּיְמִינְךָ נֶצַח	11c

²⁹ Annotation by Ch.A.

³⁰ Translation by Ch.A.

³¹ Annotation by Ch.A.

³² Annotation by Ch.A.

³³ Annotation by Ch.A.

3.1 Help for the threatened throat (Ps 16:1–6, 10)

In order to be able to interpret vv. 1–6, it is necessary to clarify the sense of v. 10, in which the worshipper distinctly expresses his situation. Just as in Ps 33:19, where the throats of the praying community are threatened by death, so too in Ps 16:10 the throat of the individual worshipper is precariously close to sheol (שְׁאוֹל) and the pit (בֹּרַחַת). However, YHWH does not consign (צָבַע) his throat to sheol and frees the faithful servant from seeing (רָאָה) the pit.³⁴

As the following illustration shows, there was a notion in Egypt that the soul of a deceased person could, from time to time, leave the grave in the form of a bird and return to earth. During this time, the bird is said, amongst other things, to collect food and gain strength for the deceased person.

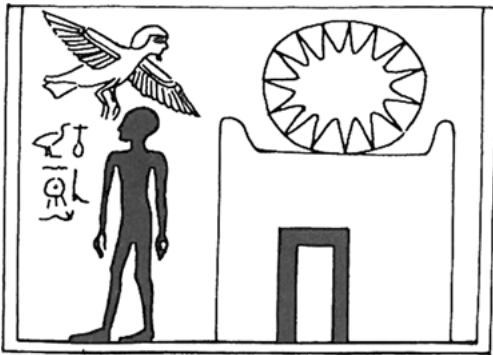


Fig. 4 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 55, 57, 361)

The Amenemsaf papyrus illustrates the bird, Ba, as analogous to the throat. He departs from the grave in order to view the sun. The corpse is not granted this privilege.

In ancient Israel, however, the emphasis lies on the temporal. It is clear from Ps 16:11 that the worshipper is concerned with the continuation of his journey through life.

The second metaphor also demonstrates acute mortal danger. By a pit, what is presumably meant is a dried up cistern, which might serve as a prison.

³⁴ In Ps 49:10, “seeing the pit” is actually used as a description for dying. In Acts 2:31, Ps 16:10 is interpreted as an anticipation of Christ’s resurrection. In the Psalm, however, it concerns rescue from mortal danger (cf. Kraus, *Psalmen* 1, 125).

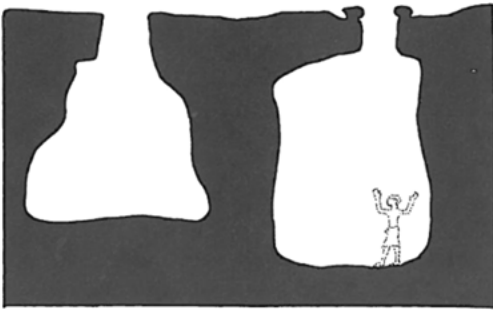


Fig. 5 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 61, 361) Cross-sections of typical cisterns illustrate the similarity of the dark pit to a grave. Without outside help it would have been impossible to escape from it.

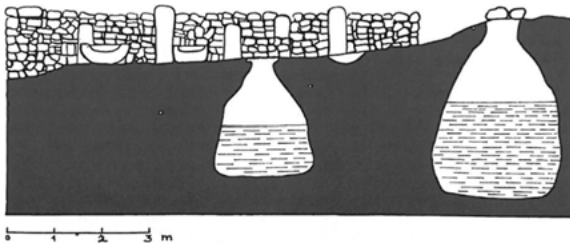


Fig. 6 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 61, 361) Since the actual purpose of cisterns was the storage of water, this makes the pit even more threatening. Even dried up cisterns were often still covered with a deep and dangerous layer of mud.

Only with outside help could one escape such a pit. In everyday life, vessels such as the following were lowered into the pit and then pulled back up into the light. This might represent YHWH, who pulls worshippers out of their misery (Ps 30:2).

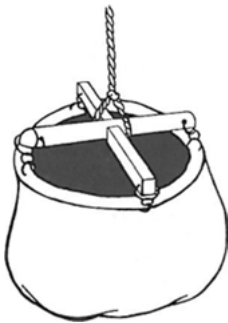


Fig. 7 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 61–62, 361) A leather vessel.

In the light of this threat, the prayer in Ps 16:1b immediately addresses God with the imperative, “Keep me safe!” (שְׁמֹרֵנִי). The worshipper also, however, knows that he can expect good things (טוֹבָה) from God and from God alone (v. 2b). At this point he addresses him by his “name” YHWH (v. 2a).

Vv. 5–6 illustrate that this worshipper suffered from starvation the same way as did those in Ps 33. The goodness of YHWH (v. 2b) consists in his allotting land to the worshipper. The worshipper receives his allotted portion (מִנְתַּחֲלָקִי) from God (v. 5a). Being God’s heir means that one’s basic needs are secured.

The other terms, “lot” (גּוֹרֵל; v. 5a), “measuring line” (קֶבֶל; v. 6a) and “inheritance” (נַחֲלָה; v. 6b), continue the topic of land administration. With the measuring line, YHWH allots the land (cf. Ps 78:55). Kraus points out that all of the expressions (מִנְתַּחֲלָקִי, בּוֹס, גּוֹרֵל, קֶבֶל and נַחֲלָה) used here are connected with the narratives on land allotment (cf. Num 18:21; Deut 4:21; Josh 13:23; 14:4; 15:13; 17:5).³⁵ The allotted land allows Israel to survive by cultivating fields, harvesting fruits, and digging wells.



Fig. 8 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 207–208, 367)

This painting is from the tomb of Menena, from the late 18th Dynasty (1570–1345 BC), located in Abd el Qurna. Like the land in Egypt, the land in Israel was, most likely, also measured with cords.

Perhaps YHWH allots the land just as he does in Ps 78:55 (see also Ps 105:11), and has driven out the strangers from it. It may have been the property of the people in 16:4, who may have threatened the worshipper, but who are now themselves suffering from sorrow. Since they worship other gods, the worshipper explicitly disassociates himself from them. He wants to avoid preserving their names, that is to say, deny them an existence (v. 4b). In contrast, he conforms to those, whom he describes as “saints” (קְדוֹשִׁים) and “excellent” (אֲדִירִים) people, and who, just as he, make their way with YHWH. The worshipper in-

³⁵ Cf. Kraus, *Psalmen* 1, 122.

cludes himself among the faithful servants (דָּסִיִּד; v. 10b). He has entrusted himself entirely to YHWH and, thus, need not fear sheol, nor the pit. To him, the allotted land equates with the “delights” (נְעֻמִים; v. 6a), which emanate from YHWH. At the end of the song it is clear that YHWH permanently keeps these delights at his right hand (v. 11b). For this reason, the worshipper’s throat can breathe more easily.

3.2 The heart rejoices, the liver exults (Ps 16:7–11)

Following the discourse on the allotted land, the worshipper blesses YHWH (וְאָבְרָךְ אֱתֵיהוָה; v. 7a) and will never be shaken (בְּלֹא־מֹזוֹט; v. 8b). The worshipper knows that he has been counselled (צָעָה) by YHWH (v. 7a),³⁶ even at night his kidneys counselled him (סָרָה; v. 7b; synonymous parallelism).³⁷

In vv. 9 and 11 great joy follows the reassurance that God is near (vv. 7–8). These verses represent the framework for v. 10, in which the situation of the worshipper is discussed. Because YHWH rescues him from mortal danger, he becomes joyful. In v. 9 his joy manifests itself in a physical manner, through two inner organs and two different terms for joy. The heart of the worshipper rejoices (שָׂמַח) and his liver exults (גִּיל; v. 9a). Furthermore, the worshipper realizes that his flesh, that is, he as a whole, can dwell securely (v. 9b).

Very few Hebrew manuscripts contain the spelling כִּבְדִי rather than כְּבוֹדִי. Koehler/Baumgartner cite Ps 16:9 analogous to Pss 7:6; 30:13; 57:9 and 108:2 under the term “liver” (כְּבֵדָה).³⁸ Gunkel also believes that for כְּבוֹדִי a vowel was falsely supplemented and that it should correctly be כִּבְדִי, “my liver”.³⁹ Aside from this, there are several parallels in Accadian for the liver as the subject of joyful jubilation.⁴⁰ The variant כִּבְדִי is given preference for two reasons. Firstly, the term כְּבוֹד/כִּבְדָה stands parallel to the other physical expressions “heart” (לֵב) and “flesh” (בָּשָׂר). In this strongly, body-related manner of speaking, a

³⁶ Similarly, God, in Ps 32:8, counsels a worshipper. Moreover, his eye is upon him (אֵינָהּ עַל־יָדָי; v. 8).

³⁷ God instructs (סָרָה) his people as a man instructs his child (Deut 8:5; cf. Deut 21:18; 22:18; 1 Kgs 12:11, 14 and 2 Chr 10:11, 14). This instruction may serve as a process of strengthening (Hos 7:15), or be understood as guidance in decision making (Isa 8:11; 28:16; cf. Ps 2:10; Jer 6:8; Hos 7:12).

³⁸ Cf. Koehler/Baumgartner, *Lexikon* 1, 435.

³⁹ Cf. Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 54.

⁴⁰ Cf. Wolff, *Anthropologie*, 110. The only mention of an exulting liver in the Hebrew Bible is found here.

parallel with **כְּבוֹד** seems very reasonable. Secondly, with the word “exult” (**גִּיל**), the noun has a “speaking”-verb correlating with it. This corresponds better to the physical aspect of a person, that is to the liver, rather to the abstract term “honour/glory”.⁴¹

For the expression of joy, terms relating to two inner organs are chosen. The heart reacts intellectually and emotionally to the experience. The worshipper realizes what possibilities he has in life as a result of working the land: the production of crops and fruits, water in wells and cisterns, and security on his own demarcated property. This knowledge causes emotional joy. Just like the other inner organs, the liver is linked to solely emotional processes.⁴² Specifically, the liver demonstrates a positive mood through exultation.⁴³ By way of the verb **גִּיל**, spontaneous jubilation is expressed. Likewise, the Ugaritic Baal cycle says the following about Anat, in Kaiser’s translation: „Ihr Inneres⁴⁴ schwoll durch Lachen, es füllte sich ihr Herz mit Freude, das Innere der Anat mit Triumph.“⁴⁵ (Their livers swelled up from laughing, their hearts were filled with joy, their insides with triumph.)

In terms of content, v. 11 is connected with vv. 9 and 10. V. 11a positively formulates that YHWH makes possible the path of life. The path of life is followed by a discourse on the “fullness of joy” (v. 11b). The worshipper experiences such fullness of joy because YHWH turns his face towards him. Again, we have here an emotionally experienced joy, in the encounter between man and God. New possibilities of life arise from this experience of joy, which emanates from God’s countenance and the benefit of his good deeds (v. 11b, c).

⁴¹ Smith (Herz, 172) mentions the parallel usage of the organ, the “heart”, as an argument for the interpretation of “liver”. Furthermore, he points out that there is no connection here with the topic of “glory” and that there exist difficulties in the matter of the textual criticism. The word could have been understood secondarily as **כְּבוֹד**, “magnificence/splendour” (Smith, Herz, 173).

⁴² Cf. Smith, Herz, 173. Prov 23 contains a comparable statement about the heart and the kidneys: “My heart rejoices” (**וַיִּשְׂמַח לִבִּי**; v. 15), “and my kidneys exult” (**וַיִּתְעַלְזְנָה כְּלֵי־וֶתֶן**; v. 16). Here, the kidneys, just like the liver, represent the emotional expression of joy, while the heart, on the other hand, rejoices over the son’s wisdom.

⁴³ According to the original meaning of the word “weighty”, feelings of depression, as well as joy are clearly manifest in the liver. The perceptions attributed to all the organs together create the impression of a region in the middle of the body, in which a person feels, thinks and also makes decisions, and acts accordingly (cf. Schroer/Staubli, *Körpersymbolik*, 78).

⁴⁴ „*kbd*, Inneres/Leber“ (Kaiser, TUAT III, 1139, note 41). Greenfield (Notes, 143) in this text, translates the word *kbdh* as liver.

⁴⁵ Kaiser, TUAT III, 1139.

In v. 11b, joy is described with the same root word שָׂמַח as in v. 9a. Here, the term שָׂמַח is expanded into the expression “fullness (שִׂבְעַ) of joy” and through the use of the plural (שִׂמְחוֹת).⁴⁶ In other texts, the noun שִׂבְעַ specifically means eating to satisfaction.⁴⁷ In Ps 16:5–6 the worshipper learns that YHWH creates the prerequisites for such satiety. Knowledge of this is the cause of the joy and jubilation in v. 9. In the discourse on the total joy before YHWH’s countenance (אַת־פָּנָיִךְ) in v. 11b, the worshipper expresses the idea that YHWH is the source of satiety and, thus, also of joy.⁴⁸ By using the term countenance,⁴⁹ he depicts God in the anthropomorphic manner of behaving, like himself, in a physical way. Human beings turn to each other with their face. The worshipper describes God’s devotion in the same way. Therein lies the reason for the satisfaction of his needs and the joy that follows from this. In his joy, the worshipper faces God, and in this encounter, experiences an unsurpassable benefit. It is in the nature of joyful emotion that it communicates and permeates itself. This joy is in its most tangible and fullest form in the face of YHWH. The utilization of the noun שִׂמְחָה, the nominal clause, and the possibility of a satiety of joy indicate that YHWH’s joy is a constant, divine trait. While the human being strives after a joyful mood (εὐδαιμονία), it is, according to his perception, in its perfect form, already present in God.

In v. 11c, “delights” (נְעֻמוֹת) are mentioned as a parallel to sated joy. These are in YHWH’s right hand (בְּיְמִינֶךָ).⁵⁰ With that, YHWH is once again described with a physical term. The delights specifically refer to the land that the worshipper has obviously received as his allotted portion (Ps 16:5–6). In the following illustration from Egypt, a worshipper stands before the face of God. The

⁴⁶ Only in Ps 45:16 is this plural form used one more time. “In the singular it already expresses the idea of feelings and expressions of joy but choosing this rare form accentuates the extraordinary character of the sentiments” (Mindling, Hope, 324).

⁴⁷ This is promised by God (Lev 25:19; 26:5; Deut 23:25; Ruth 2:18; Ps 78:25), or it is the reward for the righteous (Prov 13:25). During the wandering in the wilderness, it seems to Israel, as if, in Egypt, they had eaten bread until they were satisfied (cf. Exod 16:3).

⁴⁸ Great joy “before the face of God” is also mentioned at the banquet for King Solomon (1 Chr 29:22). YHWH himself favours the king with such a joy (Ps 21:7). The joy is especially great in Ps 68:4: “But let the righteous be joyful; let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy” (New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]; וְצַדִּיקִים יִשְׂמְחוּ יַעֲלִצוּ לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׂשׂוּ בְשִׂמְחָה; Ps 68:4). In Ps 100:2, the people are to approach God’s face with exultation (בְּאוֹר לְפָנָיו בְּרִנְנָה), and in Isa 9:2 we find that this joy is comparable with the joy over the harvest.

⁴⁹ If one links the statement in v. 11b with the fact that a person cannot behold the face of God and stay alive (Exod 33:20), the fullness of joy may represent a type of veil before his countenance.

⁵⁰ In Ps 135:3, YHWH himself is described as נְעִים.

delights that are due to him are embodied in the ankh-symbol found in the god's right hand.



Fig. 9 (Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, 146, 148, 365)

At the heart of the Egyptian mortuary chapel there existed, in most cases, a cultic image the size of a grown man. The double doors of this windowless room were opened only for certain cultic acts. This cultic image is a limestone relief found in the Temple of Seti I (1317–1301 BC) in Abydos.

Both nominal clauses in v. 11b, c convey the conviction that limitless joy and delights come from God. The particle “forever” (גִּלְעוֹ) reinforces timelessness and, as the last word of the prayer, carries considerable weight.

3.3 Summary (Ps 16)

Just as in Ps 33, emotions are described in Ps 16 in a physical manner. Of three inner organs, the first to be mentioned are the kidneys in v. 7b. The worshipper compares their ceaseless functioning during the day and even at night with YHWH's constant instruction. The worshipper feels in his heart (לֵב; v. 9a) the joy (שִׂמְחָה) that follows. Furthermore, his liver (כִּבְדֹ/כִבְדֹ) exults (גִּיל; v. 9b). The heart, as the centre of thought, has realized that the daily battle for survival is over. It now has every reason to rejoice. The worshipper intensifies the emotional aspect of his joy by describing his “good feeling”. It is as though his liver were exulting. The parallel terms שִׂמְחָה and גִּיל illustrate the greatness of his joy.

The fullness of joy is located in YHWH's face (v. 11b). This joy of YHWH's may be identified with the continuously joyful mood discussed in contemporary psychological research. His joy (שִׂמְחָה) is permanently available (nominal clause) and invites us to receive our fill (שָׂבַע). Not only can the worshipper, in communication with God, satisfy his hunger, but he can also find joy in the greatest abundance.

4 YHWH's Torah gives lasting joy (Ps 19:8–11)

In the mid-section of Psalm 19, a textually and poetically pre-eminent description of the effective power of YHWH's Torah follows a song about creation (Ps 19:1–7). The Torah enables life and gives joy. This joy is noticeable in enlightened eyes (v. 9b, d).

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul/ throat . ⁵¹	תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ	8a 8b
The decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.	עֲדוּת יְהוָה נֶאֱמָנָה מְחַכְמֶת פְּתִי	8c 8d
The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.	פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׁרִים מְשַׂמְחֵי לֵב	9a 9b
The command of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eye.	מִצְוַת יְהוָה בְּרָה מְאִירַת עֵינַיִם	9c 9d
The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.	יִרְאַת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד	10a 10b
The statutes of the LORD are true, all of them just;	מִשְׁפָּטֵי יְהוָה אֱמֶת צְדָקוֹ יַחְדָּו	10c 10d
More desirable than gold, than a hoard of purest gold,	הַנְּחָמָדִים מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּז רַב	11a 11b
sweeter also than honey or drippings from the comb.	וּמִתּוֹקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וּנְפֹת צוּפִים	11c 11d

YHWH's perfect Torah has a “reviving” effect on “the throat” (מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ; v. 8b). In other words, the Torah enables the active potential of a person's life to be restored (*hif'il*).⁵² It is similar to Ps 23:3. YHWH revives the worshipper's throat by providing a great abundance of benefits, as well as through security. In Ps 35:17 the worshipper, in reference to his adversaries, calls upon YHWH to restore his life/his throat. The throat is renewed by YHWH, whenever it is threatened by hunger, death, or death-like conditions. The same goes for the throat in Ps 19:8b. Through YHWH's Torah, it is called back to life. Parallel to

⁵¹ Annotation by Ch.A.

⁵² “In fact, it helps suggest that the sense of מְשִׁיבַת is not simply ‘refreshing’ a well-to-do soul, but restoring a lost life” (Denninger, Creator's Fiat, 146).

v. 8a, b, the trustworthy (אמן)⁵³ decree of the Lord (עֲדוֹת יְהוָה) gives wisdom to the inexperienced and simple (מִחְכֵּמֵת פְּתִי; v. 8d; *hif'il*). The term “simple” (פְּתִי), just like the throat (נֶפֶשׁ), which is parallel to it, illustrates the neediness of the whole person.⁵⁴

In verse 9b, the sound precepts of the Lord are conducive to a “rejoicing of the heart” (מְשַׂמְּחֵי לֵב). Parallel to this, the clear command of the Lord is “enlightening the eyes” (מְאִירַת עֵינַיִם; v. 9d). The verb “to rejoice” (שָׂמַח) is the only verb in that line that is used in the *pi'el*. The expression of joy, in all its intensity, is, compared with the other phrases, more intensely accentuated. As with the surrounding verbs, שָׂמַח is used as a participle, thus making the statement indefinite. The joy continues. The revival of the throat is also permanent (v. 8b; participle); in other words, the throat survives all perils. The heart knows of the life-promoting effect of the Torah and, as a result, acquires a constant passion for life. In observing YHWH’s Torah, a person lives in a permanent state of happiness. In v. 9d the zest for life may be seen in the eyes of those concerned. The parallel wording of v. 9b and 9d demonstrate that the enlightening of the eyes may also be understood as rejoicing.⁵⁵ Joy becomes perceptible and visible in the heart (לֵב) and in the eyes (עֵינַיִם). Happy people may be recognized by their radiant eyes.

V. 10 continues the synonymous parallelism, but, in terms of content, it sets new priorities. Instead of a further description of YHWH’s Torah, v. 10a begins with “the fear of the Lord” (יִרְאַת יְהוָה),⁵⁶ that is to say, a human reaction to what has been experienced. Man enters into communication with YHWH. The joy over the revival of the throat urges one to interact with God. The fear of the Lord described here may be an expression of gratitude. In any event, it is regarded as “pure” (טָהוֹר). In addition to describing cultic and moral purity,⁵⁷ this word is also used in Exod 24:10 to speak of the pure heavens. Human beings

⁵³ God is, furthermore, considered trustworthy in Deut 7:9; Isa 49:7; 55:3; Jer 42:5; Hos 12:1, his word in 1 Kgs 8:26; 1 Chr 17:23–24; 2 Chr 1:9; 6:17, his covenant in Ps 89:29, his decrees in Ps 93:5 and his judgement in Ps 111:7.

⁵⁴ Cf. Grund, Himmell, 230.

⁵⁵ Ryder (D-Stem, 102) describes the meaning of שָׂמַח in the *pi'el* “frequent as ‘make joyful’ (Dt. 24.5)”.

⁵⁶ BHQ notes within the critical apparatus that instead of the initial expression, “the fear of the Lord” (יִרְאַת יְהוָה) perhaps, in comparison with Ps 119:38, we should read “the word of the Lord” (אִמְרַת יְהוָה). However, the sense of יִרְאַת יְהוָה in v. 10a concerns the worshipper’s reaction. This anomaly in the 12-line sequence, which corresponds to the emerging verbal clause in v. 10d, should be retained.

⁵⁷ Cf. Lev 4:12; 6:4; 7:19; 10:10; Ps 51:12; Prov 22:11 and Hab 1:13.

reciprocate the heavenly purity of God with their fear. V. 10c returns to the original line of meanings. The nominal clause indicates that YHWH's judgements (מִשְׁפָּטֵי־יְהוָה), correspond totally to the truth (אֱמֶת). V. 10d contains the only verbal clause used in this section. The verb "to be just" (צָדִיק; suffix conjugation) and the adverb "all of them" (כָּל־הֵם) summarize the characteristics of the Torah. Behind this are many concrete experiences, in which YHWH has passed his judgment and his Torah has given new viability.

Both nominal clauses in v. 11 describe the Torah of the Lord as "more desirable than gold" (וּמִפְּנֵי רָב),⁵⁸ "and a hoard of purest gold" (וּמִתּוֹקִים מְדַבֵּשׁ), "and sweeter than honey" (וּמִתּוֹקִים מְדַבֵּשׁ), "or drippings from the comb" (וּנְפֶת צִוּפִים). Whoever upholds the Torah will grow rich in treasures and be satiated with delicacies. It is not just about gold, but about purest gold; not just about honey, but also about drippings from the honeycomb.⁵⁹ Gold is ten times higher in value than silver⁶⁰ and was used for the building of the temple, as well as its furnishings and décor. Moreover, shiny gold can be easily integrated into the Psalm's themes on light and sun, as well as into the narrative on the clarity and purity of the commandments.⁶¹ The drippings from the honeycomb may be described as the purest of honey.⁶² This sweetness illustrates the abundance that the people receive. However, "Yahweh's law is just right and more satisfying than the most enjoyable delicacy."⁶³ The worshippers appreciate the Torah as being something desirable that brings pleasure and joy.⁶⁴

In summary, it may be stated that the Torah perpetually gladdens the heart of man (v. 9b) and enlightens his eyes (v. 9d). Just as in the previous examples, physical terms are used in order to describe emotional experiences. Here, the throat is also in need of rescue (v. 8b), although there is no mention of any specific situation. It is altogether about the life-sustaining power of the Torah. Human beings feel the joy of this in their hearts (v. 9b). This is also experienced by

⁵⁸ While in Gen 3:6 it is the tree that is desirable (חָמֵד), in Ps 19:11 it is the Torah (cf. Meinhold, Psalm 19, 57).

⁵⁹ Cf. Goldingay, Psalms 1, 293.

⁶⁰ Cf. Grund, Himmel, 237.

⁶¹ Cf. Grund, Himmel, 238.

⁶² Cf. Cohen, Psalms, 55.

⁶³ Denninger, Creator's Fiat, 153.

⁶⁴ Cf. Grund, Himmel, 236–237. Similarly, in Ps 119:127, the worshipper says that he loves YHWH's commandments (מִצְוָה) "more than gold, more than fine gold" (מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּז). In Ps 119:72 he describes the law (תּוֹרָה) coming from YHWH's mouth as being more precious to him than heaps of silver and gold (מֵאֲלָפֵי זָהָב וְכֶסֶף). In Prov 24:13 the son is called upon to eat honey because it is good (דְּבַשׁ כִּי־טוֹב) and the drippings of the honeycomb that are sweet to the taste (נְפֶת מִתּוֹק עַל־חֶכְךָ).

others through the enlightenment of their eyes (v. 9d). The nominal clauses demonstrate the boundlessness of YHWH's gifts through his Torah.

5 Conclusions

According to the Psalms studied here, joy is either a spontaneous reaction to a stroke of good luck, or a sign of a fundamentally positive way of life. In the Hebrew text, joy is, accordingly, expressed in single instances in verbal forms (Pss 16:9; 33:21), or continuously with a noun (Ps 16:11), and a participle (Ps 19:9).

Climactic experiences, such as those described in Pss 33:18–19 and 16:5–6, trigger brief experiences of joy (Pss 33:21; 16:9). Furthermore, they may strengthen the positive mood of human beings. According to today's psychologists, however, a permanent state of happiness grows out of a contented way of life, as well as out of an enjoyment of life in general. For the worshippers described in the Hebrew Bible, a trusting relationship with YHWH is the best precondition for a lasting enjoyment of life (cf. Ps 16:11). YHWH's Torah shows the way to a permanent state of happiness (cf. Ps 19:8–11).

Figures

- Fig. 1: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 88, 66.
- Fig. 2: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 325, 217.
- Fig. 3: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 305, 202.
- Fig. 4: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 72, 57.
- Fig. 5: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 78, 61.
- Fig. 6: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 79, 61.
- Fig. 7: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 80, 62.
- Fig. 8: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 311, 207.
- Fig. 9: Keel, *Bildsymbolik*, illus. 230, 148.

Abstract

Today's research on pleasurable feelings distinguishes between the brief experience of joy and a permanent state of happiness. These two varieties of experience may be identified in the book of Psalms. Three examples will illustrate this. In Psalm 33 God sets an end to famine and thus saves the throat (נֶפֶשׁ) of the praying community from the peril to its life. The heart of this people then responds with joy (v. 21). In Psalm 16 hunger leads to fatal danger. However, God gives the worshipper land, and thus new possibilities of life. The heart of this people recognizes God's intervention, becomes joyful and their liver spontaneously expresses its cheerfulness (v. 9). Finally the worshipper realizes that in the view of YHWH he/she will be permanently filled with joy (v. 11). Lasting joy is also the topic in Ps 19:9. YHWH's Torah generally pleases the heart of human beings and brings light to their eyes.

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