

*New Year's Day, 1980*: This thinksheet is a meditation on this verse as come upon this morning in the process, for my OT readings, of comparing the Hebrew with 26 English translations (as visible in Curtis Vaughn's THE OT BOOKS OF POETRY FROM 26 TRANSLATIONS [Zondervan/73/76]).

\*A great poet's song in the night (literally; and mental anguish, and the unconscious): God-centering (vs.8) enables God to "show me the path of life" (vs.11).

1. In the way we the West conceives the human project (including "counseling"), we are living in the twilight of Hellenisticism. The sun began to set when the heroic Olympians began to fail Homer's heroes (a process visible already in comparing the ILIAD with the ODYSSEY), and was half down when Athens' tragedians agonized over the human condition vis-a-vis the twilight of classical Athens--Augustine, 9 cs. later, analyzing, with biblical logic, the failure of the classical (Greek-Roman, "Hellenistic") heroic. But Western counseling--in contrast to Buddhist and biblical counseling--continues to be heroic. We continue (and here I do not entirely exclude myself) to advise folks to take responsibility for their own existence, to take direction not exonomously (from some other--a person, or society, or a god) but endonomously (listening to "the body,"e.g.). Freud did not break out of this heroicism, but only transposed it from the Apollonian to the Dionysiac mode (the latter we now calling "humanistic psychology" or "the human-potential movement"). Horney, esp. in her NEUROSIS AND HUMAN GROWTH, tried to break open this heroic paradigm, but had no Archimedean lever beyond the human sphere, and so utterly distorted Moses and Jesus (e.g., p.14), reading them as though they had taken the advice of the Gn.3 snake (viz., egocentric cosmizing by heuresis, which I can't be entirely against else I'd not call my midlife thing "Midlife EXPLORATION").

2. Our verse is a distich (couplet), apparently a synonymous parallelism (the 2nd line rendering the force of the 1st more impressive) but possibly synthetic (the 2nd line making an advance on the 1st). Taken in the former sense, God guides by Torah and gut; in the latter, the Torah-God and my gut advise me (which comes to the same thing, because within the biblical paradigm God is my gut's Maker--a subtle dynamic which is for me a clue for combining all counseling paradigms, West and East, without being misled by the snake into blasphemy, betrayal, breakdown, breakup of the divine-human relationship and therefore of the human-human). (Currently, I'm working on this with a secularly-trained counselor who comes to me with problematic sections [on tape] of sessions with her counselees,her motive being to integrate, in her life and work, the psychoanalytic and the spiritual.)

3. Note first that the verse is eudemonistically theocentric: the tonic (musical sense) of the inner life is gratitude to God, baruch-ly ["blessing"] addressed in a process melding Creator and creature (as in "blessing" food and the whole creation). Grumbling because of wilderness or crucifixion or holocaust is sin because the God-centering attitude of gratitude is the natural atmosphere of the creature-Creator relationship. (Peale perverted this into a secular automatism of "positive thinking," garnished with biblical language.) Reflexive sanction: The hell you go to when you do not so live is the self-prison hell,Sartre's "No Exit," Luther's *incurvatus*, Augustine's *horrenda confusio*. (ASIDE: In psycho-literature, I've never seen this great resource referred to: "The Discovery of Personality," chap.11 of C.N. Cochrane's CHRISTIANITY AND CLASSICAL CULTURE [Oxford/40/61].) The heaven you live in and go to, according to this psalm's practice of the Presence of God, "habitual vision of [the] greatness" of God (Whitehead), is a steady-state communion with God in trustful-joyful dependence, both soul and life blessing-habituated (as in the West's Abrahamic-total blessing of the creation, and the East's bodhisatva's return with blessing-dripping fingers). Within this paradigm, the end-goal-telos of counseling is not intrapsychic or even individual, but social: the joyful recentering of creation in God through the blessing process--life so lived as to culminate "the deity's efforts to restore the harmony of creation"

A contemporary of Plato (*summum bonum*, vs.2); cultic competition with chthonic religion (vs.4): Apollonian/Dionysian.  
315  
power;  
70  
παιδεύ.  
5  
vegg.

(Oxford Study NEB on Gn.12.1-3; cf., on same, NAB: "All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you"--deliberately "neutral," so can be rendered as passive ["shall be blessed in you"] or reflexive ["shall bless themselves through you," saying "'May you be as blessed as Abraham'"--or, we may say of Noble Laureate Mother Teresa, whose radiant simplicity and solid joyful peace the world had in its eye toward the close of 1979]--cf. JB: Abraham's name, in vs.2, "used as a blessing.") Self-examination, life-evaluation, according to this the biblical way of seeing and living in the world, involves the question of the blessing-effects of your/my life: who, because of us, is more God-centering and God-honoring in "holy" living, i.e. living the character of the biblical God? I had this in mind in writing the closing words of this week's Kirkridge "Readings and Intentions": "Lord of all powers and limits, of all doors open and closed, we give thanks that not without you we enter this new year. Not without you we face our fears and our hopes. Grant that not without you those whom you would have our lives bless will enter the new year and face what they must with more courage and joy because not without us"--the last four words being the punch, the Abrahamic responsibility to occasion blessing. It is in this light that Jesus' call to self-denial sets itself over against the Hellenistic-modern self-fulfilment and the Hindic self-realization (the latter two forming the West/East synthesis of "humanistic psychology" counseling, which sees Abraham and Moses and Jesus as [said Fritz Perls during the last supper I had with him] "skeletons"). (Currently, the most evil-destructive counseling is being done by ex-clergy of the biblical faiths--not all of them, but those who are still slaying the Father.) While I am sympathetic with efforts to ground values in the cosmic-organic (Hegel, Whitehead) and the bio-organic (Horney, Maslow), it comes to masturbatory [non-social] incurvation (self-idolatry) of the creation if the system is view as closed *ex opere operato*, as in the point of view within such phrases as "spontaneous generation" and "natural selection" and even "homeostasis."

4. NOTES on the roots-words underlined in my translation: "(Always) I bless the LORD my Counselor, / Even for nights when I've been torn up inside--I was learning something those nights, being taught (to pray)....COUNSELOR: I date this psalm in the 1st half of the 4th c.BC, after Job and Ps.73 (and believe our author wrote also the sister psalm, 27). Our root (OOOTS) ironically names Job's country (Job 1.1), which was ridden with counselors (the root meaning also planners, advisers, warners, teachers, schoolers, devisers, principles-inculcators, deciders, determiners, [thus even] prophets and rulers [as the ideal ruler in Ps.9.5], consultants). LXX renders by SYNETIZ., "cause to understand," (pass.) "be given insight" (of the apostles, in the last sentence of the Apostolic Fathers: Diog.12.9); related to two verbs of integration ("putting things together" and "sending...")....TORN UP...LEARNING...BEING TAUGHT: By these I render the root YSR, painful learning, moral and (in wisdom literature) intellectual discipline by whatever means and to whatever degree necessary, whether by self or another, and thus triumph over self and circumstance. This can be of vicarious benefit, as military training or moral self-sacrifice (one suffering for "our peace": Is.53.5; cf. Hos.5.2; cf. also E.F. Schumacher's appropriate-size technology and Herman Daly's steady-state economics). Rightly received, suffering matures spiritual insight and blesses God and the rest of creation; through it (as in Prov.3.12) the benevolent God intends joy (so "bless...bliss" [same root!], the latter the last word of Ps.17 in Butt.tr.). Other verbs: bind, chasten, correct, punish, reform, reprove, exhort, censure, admonish, warn, teach, instruct, rebuke, indoctrinate. LXX renders PAIDEU., the basic verb for education....INSIDE: Root CHLH means "enclose," here the psychophysical soft parts (thus my term "skin bag"); used of hollow stringed-instrument and of containers of all sorts. BDB: "my reins (the emotions of my own heart), correct, admonish me." Lit. the kidneys, (BDB) "the most sensitive and vital part"--also translated heart, impulses, conscience, inmost thoughts, mind (as the interior self), the inner being--through which God speaks (Weiser, Cohen). Let your inner being meditate on God's wonders: Deut.11.2. LXX renders NEPHR. (cf.Eng."nephritis") --which carries only once into NT: Rev.2.23: "It is I who search heart [intellect] and loins [emotions, feelings]"--upper and lower coils (paralleling Ps.7.10).