

PSALM 63: I THIRST FOR YOU, OH GOD ...

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Abstract

The psalms should not only be the object of scholarly research, but also of devotional readings. Poetic texts have the innate ability to verbalize and articulate the journey of faith under various circumstances. Poetic imagination and the poetic word issue bold invitations to a new possibility of life and transformed faith. New vitality erupts from their daring summons to spiritual transformation. This transformative power of the poetic word places great authority and the ability to influence in the mouth of the poet. By their words, poets can create new realities and new beginnings. They are empowered through the dramatic artistry of the poetic word to bring about spiritual transformation in the hearts and lives of their hearers and readers. This article offers a reading of Psalm 63 that focuses on spiritual transformation. The yearning and thirst of the psalmist to encounter God speaks of the imaginative power of the poetic word to lead into spiritual transformation and renewal.

1. Introduction

Poetic texts verbalize and articulate the faith and experiences of the community of the faithful under various circumstances. The power of the

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poetic word is such that it can generate new beginnings with creative and vigorous actions from God that will result in the transformation of circumstances and people. Poets not only discern God's new actions but evoke God's fresh actions through the power of imagination and words. Poetic imagination and the poetic word issue bold invitations to a new possibility of life and transformed faith. New vitality erupts from their daring summons to spiritual transformation.²

This transformative power of the poetic word places great authority and the ability to influence in the mouth of the poet. By the words of their mouths, poets can create new realities and new beginnings. They are empowered through the dramatic artistry of the poetic word to bring about spiritual transformation in the hearts and lives of their hearers and readers.

This study offers a reading of Psalm 63 that focuses on spiritual transformation. The yearning and thirst of the psalmist to encounter God is a testimony to the imaginative power of the poetic word to lead into spiritual transformation and renewal.

This reading of the psalm takes Walter Brueggemann's remarks concerning the precritical and critical study of the psalms into consideration. Brueggemann argues that a devotional reading of the psalms can be weakened when ignoring the insights and perspectives of scholarly studies, while scholarship can often be dry and uninteresting with its focus on formal questions, while matters of exposition are disregarded.³

The insights of scholarly study on the psalms and a more devotional reading of the psalms should not be mutually exclusive, but should inform and correct each other. The psalms should always take their place within academic study, but they should also take their place within the journey of faith, and specifically, as I want to do here, within the journey and process of spiritual transformation.

My reading of Psalm 63 also takes into account Clinton McCann's assertion that although the psalms originated predominantly within the liturgical life of ancient Israel and Judah, they were also appropriated, conserved, and communicated as instruction to the faithful. The psalms should therefore also be read as teachings about God, the world, ourselves and the life of faith.⁴ Psalm 63 is thus read as instruction, through the imaginative power of the poetic word, to guide the reader to spiritual transformation.

² W. Brueggemann, *Hopeful imagination: Prophetic voices in exile*, Philadelphia 1986, p. 2.

³ W. Brueggemann, *The message of the Psalms: A theological commentary*, Minneapolis 1984, p. 16.

⁴ J. C. McCann, The Psalms as instruction, *Interpretation* 46 (1992), pp. 117-128 – J. C. McCann, *A theological introduction to the Book of Psalms*, Nashville 1993, pp.19-21.

2. Structure, Gattung, Sitz im Leben

Structure

Scholars differ on the structure of Psalm 63. Fokkelman⁵ argues for a structure of three stanzas, each consisting of two strophes: Stanza 1 (verses 2-3 and 4-5), stanza 2 (verses 6-7 and 8-9), and stanza 3 (verses 10-11 and 12). Hossfeld and Zenger⁶ also argue for a three part division, but they differ in the details thereof. They understand the three sections to be verses 2-5, 6-8 and 9-12.

Gerstenberger⁷ divides the psalm in four parts: Verse 2 (Invocation), verses 3-5 (affirmation of confidence), verses 6-9 (thanksgiving) and verses 10-12 (imprecation and intercession). Terrien⁸ also divides the psalm in four strophes: Verses 2-3 (the thirst for God), verses 4-6 (heavenly love and earthly life), verses 7-9 (insomnia and meditative watch) and verses 10-12 (the fate of the foes and the joy of the king). My own suggestion is in agreement with Terrien:

Thirsting for God (verses 2-3).

Verses 2-3 serve as the introduction to the psalm. These two verses provide the foundation for the theme of spiritual transformation. The poet states his intent clearly: he consistently pursues the presence of God, longing for Him and the revelation of his power and glory in his life. The section begins with a verbless clause (“you are my God”) followed by a declaration of intent (“I will seek You”).

God’s faithful love as foundation for praise and spiritual satisfaction (verses 4-6)

This section focus on the fact that God’s faithful love is the best thing there is. It is even better than life itself. Thus it becomes the foundation for the praise that the psalmist offers and his experience of being spiritually satisfied. The section also begins with a verbless clause (“your faithful love is better than life”) and is followed by a declaration of intent (“my lips will praise You”).

⁵ J. P. Fokkelman, *Major poems of the Hebrew Bible at the interface of prosody and structural analysis Volume III: The remaining 65 psalms*, tr. by Ch. E. Smit, [Studia Semitica Neerlandica] Assen 2003, pp. 107-111 – R. Davidson, *The vitality of worship: A commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Grand Rapids 1998, p. 198 – J. Eaton, *The Psalms: A historical and spiritual commentary with an introduction and new translation*, London 2003, pp. 235-236 – H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Psalms*, Grand Rapids 1969, p.464 – M. E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, [WBC 20] Dallas 1990, p. 125.

⁶ F-L.Hossfeld& E. Zenger, *Psalms 2*, tr. by L. M. Maloney [Hermeneia] Minneapolis, 2005, p. 123.

⁷ E. S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, part 2 and Lamentations*, [FOTL XV] Grand Rapids 2001, pp. 12-13.

⁸ S. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic structure and theological commentary*, [Eerdmans Critical Commentary] Grand Rapids, 2003, pp. 460-461.

Meditation, remembrance, clinging to God
(verses 7-9)

This section focuses on meditating on God, and remembering what He has done in the past. This leads to renewed praise and the acknowledgment that the poet clings to God. Verses 7 and 8 each begin with a verb in the perfect tense, followed by an imperfect tense. Verse 9 contains two verbs in the perfect tense.

Rejoicing and trusting in God's protection
(verses 10-12)

The last section of the psalm utilizes imperfect verbal forms throughout. The theme here is the eventual downfall of the enemies of the poet that will result in renewed praise and trust in God. This section indicates that all aspects of life should be included as part of humankind's relationship with God.

3. Gattung

Psalm 63 begins with an invocation, like the psalms of lament. It also includes other elements that are common to lament prayers: a prayer against enemies in verses 10-11; the remembrance of God's past deeds on behalf of the poet in verse 8 and a promise to praise God when the enemies are silenced in verse 12. Consequently, some scholars have classified Psalm 63 as an individual lament.⁹ Bullock then further typifies the psalm as "prayer song for the persecuted and the accused".¹⁰

The invocation is however not limited to psalms of lament (cf Pss 8:1, 21:1, 30:1, 84:1, 145:1). In addition to this, one would expect a complaint addressed to God in a lament, but this is lacking in Psalm 63. Although enemies are mentioned they do not seem to pose a specific or immediate threat. A plea to God for intervention in a situation of pain and suffering, is also absent from the psalm.

In psalms of lament God is often accused of hiddenness or neglect. His silence is frequently mentioned as the reason for the dire situation the psalmist finds himself in. God is then petitioned to turn to the psalmist and deliver him from his difficulties. We do not find this in Psalm 63. The longing for God and his presence is here not the result of a situation of distress, it is the consequence of the poet's hunger for God; it is the expression of his desire to be spiritually transformed by the presence of God in his life. Tate¹¹ argues that although the psalm begins with language which could point to a lament, "the affirmative, testimony-like statements in verses 4-5, 6-8, 9 indicate clearly

⁹ C. H. Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms*, [Encountering Biblical Studies] Grand Rapids, 2003, p. 144.

¹⁰ Bullock, *Psalms*, p. 139.

¹¹ Tate, *Psalms*, p. 125 – J. Goldingay, *Psalms Volume 2: Psalms 42-89*, [BCOTWP] Grand Rapids 2007, p. 255.

that this is a psalm of confidence. The form is that of prayer to God, which expresses assurance and confidence”. Gerstenberger also typifies the psalm as a “prayer of confidence”.¹² To my mind, there is a clear focus on spirituality in the psalm and I therefore read the psalm as a prayer for spiritual renewal.

4. Sitz im Leben

The superscription (verse 1) is one of thirteen “historical” superscriptions which associate the specific psalm with an episode in the life of David. According to the heading, David found himself in the desert of Judah. The dry and waterless landscape referred to in verse 2 might have motivated the reference to David, who found himself in the desert at various times (cf 1 Sam 23:14, 24:2). Leupold argues that the psalm reflects the experiences of David when he fled before his son Absalom.¹³ In his flight he had to cross the northern parts of the Judah wilderness (cf 2 Sam 15:23, 28; 16:2, 14; 17:16). However, the psalm itself provides no clear support for this viewpoint. Wilson¹⁴ maintains that although no specific event is described, the general setting for the psalm is provided by 1 Samuel 21-31.

Kraus¹⁵ thinks of a persecuted individual who is now present in the sanctuary under God’s protection. He spends the night there waiting on the divine verdict against his enemies, convinced that God will in fact bring about the downfall of his persecutors. Weiser had a similar viewpoint, arguing that the psalmist was “probably in the sanctuary, where he has been allowed to behold the revelation of the majesty of God and experience his gracious help, and now knows himself to be safe, being under the protection of God”.¹⁶ The mention of the king in verse 12 leads him to conclude that the setting for the psalm was the pre-exilic festival of the Yahweh cult celebrated before the ark in the royal temple. Eaton¹⁷ maintains that the reference to the king in the third person should be understood as to be the psalmist himself. According to Eaton, the king is expecting a war and prepares by seeking communion with God, probably by sleeping in the holy place, trusting God for his blessing and the defeat of his enemies.

Tate¹⁸ provides an overview of some of the proposals before concluding that... there seems to be no firm foundation for a decisive choice among the opinions about the setting and place ... because the psalm may be a purely

¹² Gerstenberger, *Psalms*, p. 15.

¹³ Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 463 – Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms*, p. 123.

¹⁴ G. H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1* [NIVAC] Grand Rapids, 2002, p. 289.

¹⁵ H-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A commentary*, tr. by H. C. Oswald, [Continental Commentary] Minneapolis, 1989, pp. 19-19.

¹⁶ A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, tr. by H. Hartwell, [OTL] London, 1962, p. 454.

¹⁷ Eaton, *Psalms*, p. 235.

¹⁸ Tate, *Psalms*, pp. 125-126.

literary work, using traditional ideas and expressions blended together into a unique composition ... In the present contexts of the Psalter, the psalm functions in a Davidic context, which has loosened it from any original cultic setting and made it available for individual worshipers, who could use it to enter into the inner spiritual life of David and make it their own. We would be wise to follow their trail and read the psalm with whatever contextual imagination proves meaningful, being careful to accept the discipline of good exegesis and literary analysis.

I wholeheartedly agree with Tate. Trying to link the psalm with specific historical circumstances seems to me a futile exercise. To my mind the psalm should be read as a literary creation of the author, wherein he utilized traditional ideas to express his own spiritual hunger for God. I therefore read the psalm within the context of spiritual renewal. The psalmist made use of various images and expressions, utilizing the imaginative power of the poetic word to bring about spiritual renewal not only in his own situation, but also in the lives of others. The power of the poetic word would have issued a bold invitation to the readers and listeners of this psalm to enter into the possibility of new life and transformed faith.

5. Analysis of Psalm 63

Thirsting for God

(verses 2-3)

With the opening words of the psalm the poet establishes that he has a personal relationship with God. The address of God as “my God” is indicative thereof. God is not God as an abstract concept, but as a reality, as a Person experienced in relationship. “Everything else in the psalm hinges on this certainty”.¹⁹ The divine-human relationship forms the foundation for the entire poem. The address also communicates the covenant between God and his people.²⁰ God has promised Israel in the covenant relationship that He would be their God and they would be his people (cf Lv 26:12). The poet thus establishes that he has a personal relationship with God that is grounded in the covenant.

The use of the personal pronoun ‘*attâ* (Thou) indicates the singularity and exclusivity of this relationship.²¹ Brueggemann writes profoundly on this: “The psalms are *prayers addressed to a known, named, identifiable You*. This is the most stunning and decisive factor in the prayers of the Psalter. Prayer is direct address to, and conversation and communion with, an agent known from a shared, treasured past”. This means that there is no vagueness, no lack

¹⁹ Davidson, *Psalms*, p. 198.

²⁰ Eaton, *Psalms*, p. 235.

²¹ Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms*, 123.

of focus, in Israel's prayers. It also means that Israel is well aware that real Life never begins with "I" but always with "Thou".²²

The poet's passion for God is evident from his utterance that he seeks God. The verb *shahar* has the edge of an 'earnest, intent, focused' search",²³ "an intensive search for God through reflection, with a practical purpose for one's life".²⁴ To search for God is "a wistful longing for his refreshing and cheering nearness (cf Ps. 78:34)".²⁵ The contextual meaning of *shahar* is "to seek eagerly or to attentively anticipate. Its most frequent usage is in the Wisdom Literature (cf Prov 1:28, 7:15, 8:17, 13:24; Job 7:21, 8:5, 24:5; cf also Ps 78:34; Hos 5:15; Isa 26:9)".²⁶

The verb is related to the noun *shahar* "daybreak", which means it can be translated "to seek early". It indicates something of the commitment people show when they get up early to do something.²⁷ It is important to take note that the seeking of God refers not to a onetime event where someone searches for something that he has not yet found, but it indicates a pattern of life with God.²⁸ It was the habit of the poet to seek God, his custom was this intense desire and longing for spiritual renewal. He thus articulates his lifestyle of a continuous, powerful desire for God.

The psalmist's longing for God is intensified by the yearning cry "I (*nephesh*) thirst for You, I (*basar*) long for You". *Nephesh* refers to "me as a whole being".²⁹ It speaks of my inner self, my total beingness. The combination of *nephesh* here with *basar* signifies that the whole person is involved in this yearning for God. The verb *kamah* is a *hapaxlegomenon* which can be translated as "long for, yearn for". Crenshaw³⁰ asserts that the language of thirst and hunger verbalizes the deep emotional intimacy that exists between the poet and God.

As an image of spiritual longing for God, thirst appears in Psalm 42:3 and 143:6 (cf also Isa 55:1-2 where the promise is given that those who thirst for God will be satisfied; cf also Mt 5:6; John 4:13-14, 7:37; Rev 22:17).

Eaton³¹ argues that the psalmist cries to God from a situation of utmost need. He seeks God urgently; "comparing his need to the desperate situation of a land without life-giving water" Terrien³² contends that the seeking of God

²² W. Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the life of faith*, ed. by P. D. Miller, Minneapolis 1995, pp. 34-35.

²³ Wilson, *Psalms*, p. 890.

²⁴ Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms*, p. 124.

²⁵ Kraus, *Psalms*, p. 19.

²⁶ Tate, *Psalms*, p. 127.

²⁷ Goldingay, *Psalms*, p. 256.

²⁸ Goldingay, *Psalms*, p. 255.

²⁹ Goldingay, *Psalms*, p. 257.

³⁰ J. L. Crenshaw, *The Psalms: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids 2001, p. 15.

³¹ Eaton, *Psalms*, p. 235 – Davidson, *Psalms*, p. 198.

³² Terrien, *Psalms*, p. 462.

is inspired by physical and moral exhaustion. To my mind, the picture painted by the poetic word should not be understood as a literal situation of thirst in a desert-like environment, but it is a metaphorical description of the spiritual longing and need that is experienced.

The physical locality of desert is thus an extremely apt and picturesque metaphor for the psalmist's spiritual thirst for God. He found himself in a spiritual desert where spiritual drought threatened to overwhelm him. He thus utilizes the poetic word to provide a powerful image of his spiritual thirst for God. It is an extremely effective image: a thirsty traveler in the hot desert sun desperate for a drink of water. "For the psalmist, God is just such a rare and life-giving commodity for which he longs".³³ Tate³⁴ also argues this point well:

"The suppliant expresses a powerful, longing desire for the near presence of God with the strong metaphorical language of thirst in a land of dryness and the fatigue brought about by a lack of water ... The geographical features of this verse are primarily metaphorical, and the physical location of the worshiper is secondary to the overpowering longing for the divine presence."

The poet's thirst for spiritual renewal has at times been satisfied in the sanctuary (verse 3), probably amongst God's people. In the sanctuary he has seen God, he has met with Him, and he has witnessed God's power and glory. In his yearning for God, he has indeed encountered Him cf Pss 27:4, 84:2). His spiritual thirst would indeed be satisfied when he sees God. Kraus³⁵ suggests that the verse probably refers to a theophany and therefore understands *hazah* here as the technical term for seeing a vision and associates it with the idea of "waiting and 'being on the lookout' for the saving meeting with God" which can be traced elsewhere as well (cf Pss 5:3, 27:4; Hab 2:1). Although *hazah* is utilized as a technical term for the reception of prophetic visions, it needs not be a reference to a theophany or vision in this verse.³⁶ It should rather be understood as an expression of the longing of the poet for a spiritual encounter with God. Again, the poet uses poetic language to evoke images of spiritual regeneration. He longs for an encounter with God's power and glory, his supremacy and his holy majesty.

God's faithful love as foundation for praise and spiritual satisfaction (verses 4-6)

Having verbalized his intense desire for God and his longing for spiritual renewal, the poet breaks forth in jubilant praise. He affirms that he will praise

³³ Wilson, *Psalms*, p. 890.

³⁴ Tate, *Psalms*, p. 127.

³⁵ Kraus, *Psalms*, p. 19 – Wilson, *Psalms*, p. 890.

³⁶ A. A. Anderson, *Psalms 1-72*, [NCBC] Grand Rapids 1981, p. 456.

God because his faithful love is better than life. Weiser³⁷ describes *hesed* as “that element in the divine majesty which characterizes God’s turning to man”. It “has for the psalmist the significance of the supreme good, outweighing all the other earthly possessions that are worthy of man’s aspirations, including even life itself” (cf Pss 36:7 ff; 73:25).

God’s *hesed* provides true value to life; without God’s *hesed* life loses its meaning. “No other psalmist expresses with such ambiguous and yet convincing overtones his appreciation of the divine embrace. Life on earth, even at the moment of the last breath, is worth living. Yet God’s love is better than life”.³⁸ The poet realizes that the greatest thing imaginable is the faithful love of God. The poet now understands his life and his inner man to be bursting with thoughts of God; he comprehends that his life should be a constant prayer, a continual testimony about God by singing his praise.³⁹ Once again the poetic word proves itself to be a powerful catalyst to evoke new possibilities of life and new experiences of the reality of God.

The psalmist, in reaction to the divine love, pledges that all his earthly lifelong he will engage in worship. Worship is nothing less than the total devotion of the human in every aspect of his /her life to God; it is nothing less than a pledge to open oneself to God and be transformed by Him. The psalmist pledges to bless God and to lift up his hands to God in worship. The verb *barak* means more than just to verbally pronounce blessing or praise. It means “to recognize someone in his position of power and in his claim to greatness with all due form”.⁴⁰ Lifting up the hands in worship refers to “a posture of prayer, probably denoting that the empty hands wait in trust to be filled with the blessings of God”.⁴¹ It includes both worship and petition.⁴²

The imaginative power of the poetic word is shown once again in verse 6 with the declaration that he will be spiritually satisfied as with fat and rich food.

“‘Fat’ is the best and most substantial food (Gen. 45:18), which in the presentation of the sacrifice belongs to God (Lev 7:23, 25); it is the essence of delight and abundance (Ps 36:8)”.⁴³

Terrien⁴⁴ adds to this by asserting that the poet envisions a kind of religious pleasure that a starving Bedouin may compare to the satisfaction and contentment resulting from the most mouthwatering meal. The experience of

³⁷ Weiser, *Psalms*, p. 455.

³⁸ Terrien, *Psalms*, p. 462.

³⁹ Weiser, *Psalms*, p. 455.

⁴⁰ Kraus, *Psalms*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Tate, *Psalms*, p. 127.

⁴² Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms*, p. 124.

⁴³ Kraus, *Psalms*, p. 20 – Tate, *Psalms*, p. 128 – Weiser, *Psalms*, p. 455.

⁴⁴ Terrien, *Psalms*, p. 463.

God's faithful love and of spiritual renewal is like a sumptuous feast where his thirst will be quenched and his hunger be stilled.

Meditation, remembrance, clinging to God
(verses 7-9)

The psalmist asserts that he remembers God and he meditates upon Him while lying on his bed at night. Kraus⁴⁵ argues that the psalmist stayed overnight in the sanctuary. I disagree with this, and suggest that it should rather be understood as a description of the poet's usual practice as part of his spiritual transformation routine. Meditating at night is mentioned often in the psalms (cf Pss 4:4, 16:7, 119:55). Meditation is an activity of the 'heart' which is the Hebrew seat of reason and decision. The verb *hagah* means to "murmur aloud"⁴⁶ and refers to the poet ruminating on God and reflecting on the teachings about God.

With God as his help, he shouted with joy as he was under the coverings of God's wings. This is an image of God's protection.⁴⁷ Verse 8 speaks of constant trust in God.⁴⁸ The psalmist clings fast (*dabaq*) to God (verse 9). This expression carries the meaning of "follow hard after" (as in Jer 42:16) with the verb "cleave / cling" used in the sense of Ruth 1:14, 2:8, 21, 23, and Ps 119:31. In Deuteronomy the verb is used for devotion to God and to his commandments (4:4, 10:20, 11:22, 13:5, 30:20). It refers to a commitment that which will not fail.⁴⁹ The same verb is used in Genesis 2:24 as description of the "close community of life between husband and wife".⁵⁰

The psalmist's clinging to God is reciprocated: God upholds him with his right hand, and supports and surrounds him. This is an indication of special divine favour.⁵¹

Rejoicing and trusting in God's protection
(verses 10-12)

The last section of the psalm moves away from the mood thus far. The focus thus far has been on spiritual hunger and a yearning for God. All of a sudden the poet prays for the destruction of his enemies. He prays that they would sink down into the depths of the earth. The depths of the earth refer to the most remote places, where they would be well away from any possible redemption or resurrection (cf Ps 88:7; Isa 44:23; Ezek 26:29; 32:18).⁵²The

⁴⁵ Kraus, *Psalms*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Terrien, *Psalms*, p. 463.

⁴⁷ Anderson, *Psalms*, p. 458.

⁴⁸ Kraus, *Psalms*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ Tate, *Psalms*, p. 128.

⁵⁰ Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms*, p. 125.

⁵¹ Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms*, p. 125.

⁵² Terrien, *Psalms*, p. 464.

poet is confident that justice will carry the day and evil be punished. He further prays that they would die by the sword, and when left in the open fields, that they would become food for jackals. Then the king would rejoice along with everyone who trusts in God.

This section indicates that the psalm is not concerned only with spiritual renewal and a hunger for God. This does not mean that these last verses are therefore ‘on a lower level’. This section shows that God is not just involved in people’s inner lives.⁵³ From a Christian point of view these cries for vengeance are extremely disturbing. I have argued elsewhere that they do serve a purpose and that the imprecation psalms can play a role within Christian worship.⁵⁴ It is important to take note that the psalmist did not take matters into his own hands; he did not personally annihilate his enemies. The psalm is a prayer addressed to God. God is implored to see to it that justice prevails. It is thus a liberating act of bold faith where the psalmist commits his desire for vengeance into the hands of God.

Although this prayer for the destruction of the enemies does not address the issue of spiritual transformation directly, it does indicate that the poet did not divide his life into compartments with certain parts belonging to God and others not. Even these most disturbing thoughts, this desire for the destruction and death of his enemies, are brought under the sovereignty of God. All spheres of life are thus part and parcel of his relationship with God.

6. Concluding remarks

Psalms 63 is a beautiful example of the transformative and instructive power of the poetic word. The psalmist verbalized his own experiences of God in colourful terms and pictures. He described his thirst and his yearning for God, as well as his being satisfied by God in vivid images. These imaginative descriptions guide the reader and listener to this psalm to follow in the footsteps of the poet in the process of spiritual renewal. The psalmist thus generates new beginnings through the creative power of his words. This will in turn lead to the transformation of the community of the faithful. His own articulation of his desire for God issues bold invitations to the possibility of new life in God.

It is thus clear that the skilfully crafted poetic word puts significant authority and the ability to influence in the mouth of the poet. This places the poet in a unique position where his use of the poetic word and his creation of picturesque images can influence others and guide them in the ways of spiritual renewal.

⁵³ Goldingay, *Psalms*, p. 261.

⁵⁴ L. P. Maré, Psalm 58: A prayer for vengeance, *OTE* 16/2, (2003), pp. 322-331 – L. P. Maré, Psalm 137: Exile – not the time for singing the Lord’s song, *OTE* 23,1, (2010), pp. 116-128.