Psalm 1 in Old English with Extreme Annotation

Use this set of annotations with Minitext A in Peter S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English*, Chapter 5. The most essential information comes at the beginning of each annotation; what comes later is often optional.

[1] Ēadiġ bicolumnð se wer

This clause can be translated word-for-word: *Blessed is the man.* ✤ **Ēadiġ**: *Blessed*, masc. nom. sg. adjective modifying and agreeing in gender, case and number with **wer**. ✤ **bicolumnð**: one of two pres. 3rd pers. sg. forms of the verb **bēon** *to be*; the other would be **is** (see §7.1.3). ✤ **se wer**: a noun phrase (a phrase consisting of a noun with its modifiers—see §§3.2, 6.1.4) and the subject of this sentence. ✤ **se**: *the*, a demonstrative pronoun, used where Modern English has 'that' or the definite article 'the'. The form is masc. nom. sg. (see §5.1.3, table 5.4). ✤ **wer**: *man*, masc. nom. sg. noun (§6.1.1, table 6.2).

þe ne gǣcolumnð on ġeþeaht unrihtwīsra,

who does not enter the counsel of the unrighteous. ✤ **þe**: *who*, a relative pronoun, beginning an adjective (relative) clause. ✤ **ne gǣcolumnð**: *does not go.* **Gǣ*columnð** is the pres. 3rd pers. sg. form of the anomalous verb **gān** (see §7.7). To negate any verb in Old English, simply put the negative adverb **ne** in front of it (see §7.8). ✤ **on**: *into.* **On** can mean *in*, *on* (generally with dative), *into*, *onto* (generally with accusative: see glossary for details, and §10.5). Here, because the noun it governs (**ġeþeaht**) is accusative, translate *into*. The word begins a prepositional phrase. ✤ **ġeþeaht**: *counsel.* neut. acc. sg. noun (§6.1.1, table 6.2), object of the preposition **on**. ✤ **unrihtwīsra**: *of the unrighteous.* gen. pl. adjective. Note that Old English does not make possessives with the preposition **of**, as Modern English does, but rather uses the genitive alone.

ne on þām weġe ne stent synfulra,

and does not stand in the way of the sinful. ✤ **ne**: here **ne** is a conjunction, *nor*, though it can also be translated with *and* followed by a negative statement. ✤ **on**: this time **on** governs a noun phrase (**þām weġe**) in the dative case, so translate *in*. ✤ **þām weġe**: another noun phrase, like **se wer**; but this one is masc. dat. sg. It is the object of the preposition **on**. ✤ **þām**: *the*, masc. dat. sg. demonstrative pronoun, agreeing with **weġe** in gender, case and number (see §5.1.3). ✤ **weġe**: *way, road.* masc. dat. sg. noun (§6.1.1, table 6.2). ✤ **ne stent**: *does not stand*, a negated verb, like **ne**

gǣð above. **stent** is the pres. 3rd pers. sg. form of **standan** *to stand* (for this class of verbs, see §7.4.1). If you are wondering why **stent** (and **sitt** a little farther on) end with **-t** instead of **-ð** or **-þ**, see §7.2.1 ('Assimilation'). ✤ **synfulra**: *of the sinful*, gen. pl. adjective, like **unrihtwīsra** above.

ne on heora wōlbærendum setle ne sitt;

and does not sit in their pestilential seat. ✤ **ne**: *nor*, the conjunction again. ✤ **on**: *in*, the preposition governing the dative. ✤ **heora wōlbærendum setle**: a noun phrase consisting of a possessive adjective (**heora**), an adjective (**wōlbærendum**) and a noun (**setle**). ✤ **heora**: *their*. This is a common variant spelling of **hira**, the gen. pl. form of the 3rd pers. pronoun (see §5.1.1, table 5.3). Note that the genitive forms in table 5.3 can be used as possessive adjectives (*his, its, her, their,* §5.1.2), and they are never inflected to agree with the nouns they modify. ✤ **wōlbærendum**: *pestilential*, neut. dat. sg. adjective, agreeing with **setle**. ✤ **setle**: *seat*. neut. dat. sg. noun (§6.1.1). ✤ **ne sitt**: *does not sit*. Another negated verb (like **ne gǣð** and **ne stent** above): **sitt** is the pres. 3rd pers. sg. form of the verb **sittan** *to sit*. Note that multiple negation is the norm in Old English: two negatives *do not* make a positive.

[2] ac his willa bið on Godes ǣ,

but his pleasure is in God's law. ✤ **ac**: *but*, one of the most common conjunctions. Attention Latinists! You may often be tempted to translate this word as *and*, which it never means. Care is needed here! ✤ **his**: *his*, the masc. gen. sg. form of the 3rd pers. pronoun (§5.1.1). ✤ **willa**: *pleasure*, a weak masc. nom. sg. noun (§6.1.2); the noun phrase **his willa** is subject of this clause. ✤ **bið**: *is*, once again, a pres. 3rd pers. sg. form of the verb **bēon** *to be*. ✤ **on**: *in*, a preposition governing the noun phrase **Godes ǣ**. You can't tell from the noun phrase whether the preposition governs the accusative or the dative case, so you have to rely on context to tell you that the most likely translation is *in*. ✤ **Godes**: *God's*, masc. gen. sg. noun (§6.1.1, table 6.2). ✤ **ǣ**: *law*. The nom., acc., gen and dat. sg. forms of this fem. noun (§6.1.1, table 6.3) are all **ǣ**, because an ending **-e** is assimilated when a noun stem ends in a vowel (a similar noun is **sǣ** *sea*). We determine by context that the case of **ǣ** must be dat.

and ymb his ǣ hē bið smēaġende dæġes and nihtes.

and he meditates upon his law by day and by night. ✤ **and**: the most common conjunction, meaning

(you guessed it!) *and*. Watch for the common variant spelling **ond**. ✣ **ymb**: *about, concerning*. The preposition **ymb** or **ymbe** usually governs the accusative (in this instance the noun phrase **his ǣ**). The base meaning has to do with location (*around, near*), but like Modern English 'about' it has come to mean *about (a subject)* as well. ✣ **his ǣ**: *his law*. See the annotations for **his** and **ǣ** above. ✣ **hē**: *he*, the masc. nom. sg. form of the 3d pers. pronoun (§5.1.1, table 5.3), and the subject of this clause. ✣ **bið smēaġende**: *is meditating*. See the annotations for the two instances of **bið** in **1.** above. In Old English the present participle ends in -**ende**; you will usually translate with a verb ending in -*ing* (see §7.1.1, item 7). Like Modern English, Old English can form a periphrastic verb consisting of a form of the verb **bēon** *to be* + present participle. The construction can express ongoing, repeated or (as here) customary action. ✣ **dæġes and nihtes**. *by day and by night (i.e. all the time)*. The genitive can express time (§4.2.3). But in this place -**es** is more like an ending that forms an adverb: the usual gen. sg. form of the athematic fem. **niht** *night* is **nihte** (§6.1.3, table 6.6), not **nihtes**.

[3] Him bið swā þām trēowe

For him it is as for the tree. The Latin text here has *et erit tamquam lignum* 'and he will be like the tree'. The motivation for the somewhat different Old English version is unclear; but the grammar is typical of Old English. ✣ **Him**: *For him*, the masc. dat. sg. of the 3rd pers. pronoun (§5.1.1, table 5.3). Note that Old English often uses the dative alone where Modern English requires a prepositional phrase. ✣ **bið**: *is*. See the annotations for the three instances of **bið** above. ✣ **swā**: *as*. This word may be a conjunction (most common meanings *as, as if*) or an adverb (*so, thus*). See further §§10.2–3. Quite often **swā** will be doubled (**swā swā**) when it is a conjunction. The word introduces an abbreviated clause, with **bið** *is* understood (*as* [*it is*] *for the tree*). Modern English often does the same thing. ✣ **þām trēowe**: *for the tree*. This noun phrase consists of a neut. dat. sg. demonstrative pronoun (§5.1.3, table 5.4) agreeing with a neut. dat. sg. noun (§6.1.1, table 6.2). As with **Him**, the dative expresses a relation that requires the preposition *for* in Modern English.

þe bið āplantod nēah wætera rynum,

that is planted near streams of water. ✣ **þe**: *that*, the relative pronoun again, introducing another adjective clause, as in **1.** above. **þe** can be used where Modern English uses *who, whom, that* and *which*. ✣ **bið āplantod**: *is planted*. The verb **bēon** *to be* with a past participle can form a periphrastic

passive in Old English, as in Modern English (the verb **weorðan** *become* can also be used as the auxiliary). See further §§3.1.3, 7.9. ✤ **nēah**: *near*. Like the Modern English word most commonly used to translate it, **nēah** can be an adjective, an adverb or a preposition. Take it here as a preposition governing the dative case (the noun phrase **wætera rynum**). ✤ **wætera rynum**: *streams of water*, a noun phrase consisting of a neut. gen. pl. **wætera** (literally *of waters*, see §6.1.1, table 6.2 for the paradigm) modifying a masc. dat. pl. noun **rynum** *streams* (see again §6.1.1, table 6.2).

þæt selð his wæstmas tō rihtre tīde,

that yields its fruits at the appropriate season. ✤ **þæt**: *that*, relative pronoun. Another way of introducing an adjective clause, using the demonstrative pronoun (§5.1.3, table 5.4) as a relative pronoun (see further §5.5). ✤ **selð**: *gives, yields*, the pres. 3rd pers. sg. of **sellan**, which comes to Modern English as 'sell' but in Old English means *give*. ✤ **his wæstmas**: *its fruits*, a noun phrase consisting of the neut. gen. sg. form of the 3rd pers. pronoun (§5.1.1, table 5.3) and the masc. acc. sg. noun **wæstmas** *fruits*. The phrase is the object of **selð**. **His** is neut. to agree with neut. **trēowe** above. Note that the masc. and neut. 3rd pers. pronouns have the same gen. sg. form (Modern *its* does not make an appearance until the Renaissance). ✤ **tō rihtre tīde**: *at the appropriate time*, a prepositional phrase, adverbial in function. ✤ **tō**: *at*, governing the noun phrase **rihtre tīde**. A number of Old English prepositions have Modern English descendants, but the meanings do not always match exactly. Some of the meanings of **tō** are still with us, but *at* [*a time*] has disappeared. ✤ **rihtre**: *appropriate*. The adjective **riht** (here fem. dat. sg., agreeing with **tīde**) means *straight, direct, correct, fitting*. ✤ **tīde**: *season*, a fem. dat. sg. noun (see §6.1.1, table 6.3). Other meanings include *time, occasion, hour*.

and his lēaf and his bladu ne fealwiað ne ne sēariað;

and its leaves and its blades neither yellow nor wither. ✤ **and**: with this conjunction the adjective clause that began with **þæt** continues. ✤ **his lēaf and his bladu**: *its leaves and its blades*, two noun phrases coordinated by **and**, making up the compound subject of the following verbs. For **his**, see the note above on **his wæstmas**. **Lēaf** and **bladu** are both neut. nom. pl. nouns. The long-stem neuter **lēaf** is endingless while short-stem **bladu** (the nom. sg. is **blæd**) has the ending **-u** (see §§2.4 and 6.1.1, table 6.2). ✤ **ne fealwiað ne ne sēariað**: *neither become yellow nor wither*. The two class 2 weak verbs are pres. pl. (§7.3.1—compare **lufian** in table 7.4), agreeing with the compound subject

consisting of plural verbs. **Ne** can be an adverb or a conjunction (*neither*, *nor*); when it is doubled, like **ne ne** here, it is always a conjunction. **Ne . . . ne** (or **ne . . . ne ne**) generally forms a correlative conjunction, *neither . . . nor* (see §10.3); but more than two **ne** clauses can be strung together, as in **1.** above.

eall him cymð tō gōde þæt þæt hē dēð.

everything that he does comes out well for him. ✤ **eall**: *all*, *everything*, the subject of this clause; it is a neut. nom. sg. adjective, here used substantively (as a noun). ✤ **him**: *for him*. See the remarks on **Him** at the beginning of **3**. ✤ **cymð**: *comes*, the pres. 3rd pers. sg. form of **cuman** *come* (§7.1.1, table 7.1). Not all of the meanings of **cuman** have to do with movement; often **cuman tō** means (as here) *come to be*, *turn out*. ✤ **tō gōde**: *to good*, a prepositional phrase with **tō** governing the neut. dat. sg. form of the noun **gōd** *good*. ✤ **þæt þæt**: *that which*, working just as in Modern English, with the first **þæt** as a neut. nom. sg. demonstrative pronoun (§5.1.3, table 5.4) and the second **þæt** as a neut. acc. sg. relative pronoun introducing an adjective clause (see the note on **þæt** above), which modifies **eall**. This relative pronoun is the object of **dēð** *does*. ✤ **hē dēð**: *he does*. **Hē** is the masc. nom. sg. form of the 3rd pers. pronoun (§5.1.1, table 5.3) and the subject of the relative clause; **dēð** *does* is the pres. 3rd pers. sg. form of the anomalous verb **dōn** *do* (§7.7).

[4] Ac þā unrihtwīsan ne bēoð nā swelċe,

But the unrighteous are not so. ✤ **Ac**: Do you remember, Latinists, what we said earlier about **ac**? ✤ **þā unrihtwīsan**: *the unrighteous*, a noun phrase and the subject of this clause. **Þā** is a nom. pl. demonstrative pronoun (§5.1.3, table 5.4) and **unrihtwīsan** unrighteous is a nom. pl. weak adjective (for the distinction between strong and weak adjectives, see §§8.2–3). ✤ **ne bēoð**: *are not*. The adverb **ne** negating an immediately following verb should be familiar by now. **Bēoð** is one of several pres. pl. forms of the verb **bēon** *to be* (the others being **sind**, **sindon**). ✤ **nā**: another negative adverb, added by way of emphasizing the negativity of the preceding verb. The pattern **ne** + verb + **nā** (or **nealles** or **nāteshwōn**) is extremely common in Old English. ✤ **swelce**: *so*, *such*, the masc. nom. pl. form of the indefinite pronoun **swelc** (also frequently spelled **swilc**, **swylc**).

ne him ēac swā ne limpð;

nor does it happen to them thus. ✤ **ne**: *nor* (again). ✤ **him**: *to them*. This is the dat. pl. form of the

3rd pers. pronoun (§5.1.1, table 5.3). It is (unfortunately) the same as the masc. and neut. dat. sg. ❈ **ēac swā**: *likewise, thus*. **Ēac** is an adverb meaning *also*; **swā** can be an adverb or a conjunction; here it is an adverb meaning *so, thus*. **Ēac** and **swā** frequently occur together in a collocation meaning *likewise, thus*. ❈ **ne limpð**: *it does not happen*. **Limpan** (also **gelimpan**) is a common verb whose most frequent meaning is *happen*; often you'll find it in a modern-looking construction like **hit ġelimpð**, but just as often you'll need to supply an *it* in your translation, as here.

ac hīe bēoð dūste ġelīcran,

but they are more like dust. ❈ **ac**: *but*. ❈ **hīe**: *they*, the nom. pl. form of the 3rd pers. pronoun (§5.1.1, table 5.3) and the subject of this clause. ❈ **bēoð**: *are*; the form could just as well have been **sind** or **sindon**, as noted above. ❈ **dūste ġelīcran**: *more like dust*. **Ġelīċ** is the adjective that comes to Modern English (minus the **ġe-** prefix) as 'like', used to make comparisons; it takes the dat., here the dat. sg. form of neut. **dūst** *dust*. The -**r**- marks **ġelīcran** as a comparative, and comparative adjectives are always declined weak (§8.4). Here -**an** is the weak nom. pl. ending.

þonne hit wind tōblǣwð.

when the wind scatters it. ❈ **þonne**: *when*. The temporal conjunctions **þonne** and **þā** are both usually translated *when*, and they both have adverbial counterparts translated *then*. But **þā** is most often used where the action takes place at a definite time, as in a narrative (**þā se biscop forðfērde** *when the bishop died*), while **þonne** is used where one is describing an action that is customary, or hypothetical, or indefinite, or in the future (**þonne sēo sunne ārīst** *when*[*ever*] *the sun rises*). ❈ **hit**: *it*, the neut. acc. sg. of the 3rd pers. pronoun (§5.1.1, table 5.3) and the object of **tōblǣwð** *blows apart*. It is neut. to agree with neut. **dūste**. ❈ **wind**: *wind*, the nom. sg. form of masc. **wind**. Notice that both **hit** and **wind** are the same in the nom. and acc. sg.: how can you tell which is the object and which the subject? When that happens, choose whichever translation makes more sense (*when the wind scatters it* makes more sense than *when it scatters the wind*). ❈ **tōblǣwð**: *blows apart*, the pres. 3rd pers. sg. form of **tōblāwan** *blow apart*. The verb **blāwan** gives us Modern English 'blow'; the prefix **tō-** often adds some sense like *apart, in pieces*. Thus **beran** means *bear* but **tōberan** means *carry off in different directions*; **teran** means *to tear* but **tōteran** means *tear into pieces*.

Þȳ ne ārīsaðˀ þā unrihtwīsan on dōmes dæġ,

Therefore the unrighteous will not arise on the day of judgement. ✤ **þȳ**: *therefore*, an adverb made from the neut. instrumental sg. of the demonstrative pronoun (§5.1.3, table 5.4). A more common adverb with the same meaning is **for þām**. ✤ **ne ārīsaðˀ**: *will not arise*. **Ārīsaðˀ** is the pres. pl. form of **ārīsan** *arise*; the pres. form is often used with future sense in Old English, which lacks a future tense. ✤ **þā unrihtwīsan**: *the unrighteous*, a noun phrase and the subject of this clause. **þā** is the nom. pl. form of the demonstrative pronoun (§5.3.1, table 5.4), here used like the definite article 'the'. **Unrihtwīsan** is a nom. pl. weak adjective used as a noun, as with the other instances in this text. ✤ **on dōmes dæġ**: *on the day of judgement*. **On** can begin a preposition phrase with temporal force, as in Modern English; it can govern the dat. or (as here) the acc. The phrase **dōmes** (masc. gen. sg.) **dæġ** (masc. acc. sg.) gives us Modern English 'doomsday'.

ne þā synfullan ne bēoðˀ on ġeþeahte þǣra rihtwīsena;

nor will the sinful be in the counsel of the righteous. ✤ **ne**: *nor*. ✤ **þā synfullan**: *the sinful*, a noun phrase consisting of the nom. pl. form of the demonstrative pronoun (§5.1.3, table 5.4) and the nom. pl. form of a weak adjective (§8.3). ✤ **ne bēoðˀ**: *will not be*, like **ne bēoðˀ** near the beginning of **4.** but to be translated with a future tense verb. ✤ **on ġeþeahte**: *in the counsel*. The construction looks a good bit like **on ġeþeaht** in **1.**, but **on** here governs the dat. instead of the acc. (see §6.1.1, table 6.2) and so should be translated *in*. ✤ **þǣra rihtwīsena**: *of the righteous*, a noun phrase consisting of a gen. pl. demonstrative pronoun (§5.1.3, table 5.4—**þǣra** is a variant spelling of **þāra**) and a weak gen. pl. adjective (§8.3).

[6] for þām God wāt hwelċne weġ þā rihtwīsan ġeearnedon,

because God knows which way the righteous have merited. ✤ **for þām**: *because*, a common conjunction for introducing a causal clause. You will also see the form **for þām ðe** and numerous spelling variants (e.g. **for þan, for þon**). ✤ **God**: *God*, a masc. nom. sg. noun and the subject of this clause. ✤ **wāt**: *knows*, the pres. 3rd pers. sg. form of the preterite-present verb **witan** (§§7.1.3, 7.6). This is the most common verb meaning *to know*. ✤ **hwelċne**: *which*, an interrogative pronoun that comes to Modern English as *which*. Here it introduces a noun clause functioning as the object of **wāt**. ✤ **weġ**: *way*, a masc. acc. sg. noun (§6.1.1, table 6.2); the noun phrase **hwelċne weġ** is the object

of the verb **ġeearnedon**. ❖ **þā rihtwīsan**: *the righteous*, a noun phrase that works like **þā unrihtwīsan** at the beginning of **4.**; it is the subject of the clause that begins with **hwelċne**. ❖ **ġeearnedon**: *merited*, the past pl. form of **ġeearnian**, a class 2 weak verb that comes to Modern English (without the **ġe-** prefix) as 'earn' (see §§7.1.1, 7.3.1).

ac þā unrihtwīsan cumað tō wītum.

but the unrighteous will come to perdition. ❖ **ac**: *but.* ❖ **þā unrihtwīsan**: *the unrighteous*, a nom. pl. noun phrase, the subject of this clause (exactly like **þā unrihtwīsan** at the beginning of **4.**). ❖ **cumað**: *come*, the pres. pl. form of the strong verb **cuman** (§7.1.1), here to be translated with a future tense verb. ❖ **tō wītum**: *to perdition*, a prepositional phrase with **tō** governing the dat. pl. form of the neut. noun **wīte** *punishment, torment, pain*. Here the plural noun relates to the punishments of hell.