

INTRO REMARKS:

## **The Psalms**

### A. Introduction

#### 1. Title

a. Hebrew: “tehillim” – “praises”

b. LXX: “psalmoi”

“songs accompanied by the plucking of strings”

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<sup>1</sup> Notes prepared with help of The Master’s Seminary BI 501 Bible Survey syllabus.

2. Authors

- a. David (**73x** - 3-9, 11-32, 34-41, 51-65, 68-70, 86, 101, 103, 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145)
- b. Moses (**1x** - 90)
- c. Solomon (**2x** - 72, 127)
- d. Asaph (**12x** - 50, 73-83)
- e. The Sons of Korah (**10x** - 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87)
- f. Heman (**1x** - 88)
- g. Ethan (**1x** - 89)

3. Date: From 1410 B.C. (Ps. 90) to 450 B.C. (Ps. 126)

4. Subtitles & Headings of the Psalms

Several headings are used to designate the types of psalms in the book. *Mizmôr*, translated “psalms,” heads 57 psalms.<sup>2</sup>

- 1) The term signified a song accompanied by stringed instruments. “Song” translates *šîr*; it is used of 12 songs.
- 2) A *maškil* is probably “a contemplative poem.” Thirteen psalms are labeled with this heading.

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<sup>2</sup> Allan Ross, BKC, 1:480.

- 3) The designation *miktām* is found with 6 psalms. Later it was understood to mean “epigram” or “inscribed poem.”
- 4) Five psalms are labeled “prayers” (*tepillâh*), and one is called a “praise” (*tehillâh*, Ps. 145).

## 5. Acrostics

- Certain psalms are alphabetically arranged as acrostics.
- An acrostic is a literary feature where each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet in consecutive order (Pss. 9–10 [together these two psalms are one acrostic poem]; 25; 34; 37; 111–112; 145).
- Psalm 119 is the largest of the acrostic Psalms
- Except for chapter 5, the entire book of Lamentations is also an acrostic

## 6. Organization

| Book (chpts) | End chpt | Theme   |   |
|--------------|----------|---|---|
| 1 (1-41)     | 41       | David's conflict w/ Saul  | Many individual laments; most psalms mention David's enemies  |
| 2(42-72)     | 72       | David's kingship  | Key psalms: 45, 48, 51, 54-64 mostly lament and "enemy" psalms  |
| 3 (73-89)    | 89       | Eighth-century-Israel's unfaithfulness has lead to judgment     | Asaph and Sons of Korah collections, key psalm: 78  |
| 4 (90-106)   | 106      | Introspection about destruction of temple and exile             | Praise collections: 95-100; key psalms: 90, 103-105   |
| 5 (107-145)  | 145      | Praise/reflection on return from Exile and beginning of new era | Hallelujah collections: 111-117, Songs of Ascent: 120-134; Davidic reprise: 138-145; key psalms 107, 110, 119 |

B. The Types of Psalms [MSB, 743; CBCOT, 47-50]

1) Wisdom psalms

- a. Definition: Guidelines for righteous living
- b. Psalms 1, 37, 73, 119
- c. Example:

**Psalm 73**

Vv. 1-3 <sup>1</sup>Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart! <sup>2</sup> But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. <sup>3</sup> For I was envious of the arrogant *as* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Vv. 25-28 <sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven *but You*? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. <sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. <sup>27</sup> For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. <sup>28</sup> But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.

**Psalm 119**

Psalm 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word.

Psalm 119:11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.

Psalm 119:25 My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.

Psalm 119:37 Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Your ways.

Psalm 119:48 I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes.

Psalm 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.

Psalm 119:75 I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

Psalm 119:92 If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction.

Psalm 119:98 Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:120 My flesh trembles for fear of You, And I am afraid of Your judgments.

Psalm 119:160 The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

Psalm 119:161 Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your words.

Psalm 119:165 Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble.

## 2) Royal psalms

- a. Definition: Anticipating the return & millennial reign of the Messiah

b. Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 47, 68, 72, 89, 101, 110, 118, 132, 144

c. Example:

**Psalm 2** The God who will establish His Rule upon the Earth

Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!" <sup>4</sup> He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. <sup>5</sup> Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, <sup>6</sup> "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." <sup>7</sup> "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. <sup>8</sup> 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. <sup>9</sup> 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.' " <sup>10</sup> Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. <sup>11</sup> Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. <sup>12</sup> Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

3) Lament psalms

a. Definition: Expression of the worshiper's sorrow & supplication to God in affliction

b. Individual Laments: 3-7, 9-10, 12-14, 17, 22, 25-28, 31, 35, 38-43, 51-57, 59, 61, 63-64, 69-71, 77, 86, 88, 89, 102, 109, 120, 123, 130, 140-143

c. National Laments: 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90

1) The Parts [COTC, 199-201]

- a) Address
- b) Lament
- c) Confession of Trust
- d) Petition
- e) Vow to Praise/Declarative Praise of God

➤ A lament psalm often has these characteristics:

- The author \_\_\_\_\_ their complaint to God.

*"O Lord, how many are my foes!" (Psalm 3)*

- The author \_\_\_\_\_ their suffering.

*"My tears have been my food, day and night." (Psalm 42)*

- The author \_\_\_\_\_ on God to help His people.

*"Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself!" (Psalm 44)*

- The author \_\_\_\_\_ on God's faithfulness and goodness.

*"But I have trusted in your steadfast love." (Psalm 13)*

➤ Example:

Psalm 79

Psalm 79:1–6 O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance; They have defiled Your holy temple; They have laid Jerusalem in ruins. <sup>2</sup> They have given the dead bodies of Your servants for food to the birds of the heavens, The flesh of Your godly ones to the beasts of the earth. <sup>3</sup> They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem; And there was no one to bury them. <sup>4</sup> We have become a reproach to our neighbors, A scoffing and derision to those around us. <sup>5</sup> How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire? <sup>6</sup> Pour out Your wrath upon the nations which do not know You, And upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Your name.

4) Imprecatory psalms:

a. Definition: a God-centered zeal for God's righteous wrath to be poured out on the wicked

b. Psalms 7, 35, 40, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137, 139, 144

c. Example:

Psalm 10:12–16 <sup>12</sup> Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up Your hand. Do not forget the afflicted. <sup>13</sup> Why has the wicked spurned God? He has said to himself, "You will not require *it*." <sup>14</sup> You have seen *it*, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand. The unfortunate commits *himself* to You; You have been the helper of the orphan. <sup>15</sup> Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer, Seek out his wickedness until You find none. <sup>16</sup> The LORD is King forever and ever; Nations have perished from His land.

5) Thanksgiving/Praise psalms:

- a. Definition: expressions of gratitude to God
- b. Psalms 8, 18, 19, 29, 30, 32-34, 36, 40, 41, 66, 100, 103-106, 111, 113, 117, 124, 129, 135, 136, 138, 139, 146-148, 150
- c. Features of the Thanksgiving/Praise Psalms
  - a) Proclamation to Praise God
  - b) Introductory Summary Statement
  - c) Report of Deliverance
  - d) Praise of God

OR

- a) Call to Praise
  - b) Cause of Praise
  - c) Renewed Call to Praise
- However, sometimes no reason is given to praise God: we praise God simply because He is God.
- d. Example:

Psalm 150:1-6 Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. <sup>2</sup> Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. <sup>3</sup> Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. <sup>4</sup> Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. <sup>5</sup> Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. <sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

An outline:

- \_\_\_\_\_ **should God be praised?** (v. 1) – in corporate worship and in heaven (“mighty expanse”)
- \_\_\_\_\_ **should God be praised?** (v. 2) – B/c of his deeds & excellent greatness
- \_\_\_\_\_ **should God be praised?** (vv. 3-6) – trumpets, harp, lyre (old school guitar’ish), timbrels, dancing,

6) Ascent/Pilgrimage psalms

- a. Definition: joyful anticipation of corporate worship (“ascent,” because when the worshiper traveled to Jerusalem, there was a sense of ascending)
- b. Psalms 43, 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 120-134
- c. Example:

**Psalm 84**

For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

<sup>1</sup> How lovely are Your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts! <sup>2</sup> My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. <sup>3</sup> The bird also has found a house, And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God. <sup>4</sup> How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You. Selah. <sup>5</sup> How blessed is the man whose strength is in You, in whose heart are the highways *to Zion*! <sup>6</sup> Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring; The early rain also covers it with blessings. <sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* appears before God in Zion. <sup>8</sup> O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; Give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah. <sup>9</sup> Behold our shield, O God, and look upon the face of Your anointed. <sup>10</sup> For a day in Your courts is better than a

thousand *outside*. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God  
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness. <sup>11</sup> For the LORD God is a sun and shield;  
The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those  
who walk uprightly. <sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts, How blessed is the man who trusts in  
You!

7) Enthronement psalms

- a. Definition: lofty expressions of the supremacy & majesty of God's sovereign reign
- b. Psalms 48, 93, 96-99
- c. Example:

Psalm 93:1-5

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. <sup>2</sup> Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting. <sup>3</sup> The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice, The floods lift up their pounding waves. <sup>4</sup> More than the sounds of many waters, *Than* the mighty breakers of the sea, The LORD on high is mighty. <sup>5</sup> Your testimonies are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O LORD, forevermore.

8) Bonus:

Psalm 23:1-6

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. <sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. <sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

C. Major Themes

1. The Sovereign God

a. The God of Creation (33, 74, 89, 95, 104, 135, 136, 147, 148)

b. The God of Israel (105, 106)

c. The God of the Nations (33)

2. The People of God – the Righteous; The Enemies of God – the Wicked (1)

3. God's Attributes Known to His People (100, 107)

- a) Loyalty (5:7; 6:4; 13:5; 17:7; 18:50; 21:7; 23:6; 25:6, 7, 10; 26:3; 31:7, 16, 21; 32:10; 33:5, 18, 22, 36:5, 7, 10; 40:10, 11; 42:8; 44:26; 48:9; 51:1; 52:1, 8; 57:3; 10; 59:10, 16, 17; 62:12; 63:3; 66:20; 69:13,16; 77:8; 85:7, 10; 86:5, 13, 15; 88:11; 89:1, 2, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49; 90:14; 92:2; 94:18; 98:3; 100:5; 101:1; 103:4, 8, 11, 17; 106:1, 7, 45; 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 108:4; 109:12, 16, 21, 26; 115:1; 117:2; 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29; 119:14, 64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159; 130:7; 136:1-26; 138:2, 8; 141:5; 143:8, 12; 144:2; 145:8; 147:11)
  - b) Goodness (16:2; 25:8; 34:8; 54:6; 68:10; 73:1; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 119:68; 135:3; 136:1; 145:9)
  - c) Faithfulness (33:4; 36:5; 40:10; 88:11; 89:1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33, 49; 92:2; 96:13; 100:5; 119:75, 86, 90, 138; 143:1)
  - d) Righteousness (7:9; 11:7; 15:2; 22:31; 31:1; 35:24; 50:6; 51:14; 69:27; 71:2, 15, 16, 19, 24; 72:1; 89:16; 97:6; 98:2; 103:17; 111:3; 112:3, 9; 119:40, 142; 143:1; 145:7)
  - e) Compassion (25:6; 40:11; 51:1; 69:16; 77:9; 78:38; 79:8; 103:4, 8, 13; 106:46; 111:4; 112:4; 116:5; 119:77)
4. David/The Davidic Covenant (78, 89, 132)

14 psalms have historical notations (Allan Ross, BKC, 1:783):

Psalm 59 & Samuel 19:11.

Psalm 56 & 1 Samuel 21:10-15.

Psalm 34 & 1 Samuel 21:10-22:2.

Psalm 52 & 1 Samuel 22:9.

Psalm 54 & 1 Samuel 23:15-23.

Psalm 7 may be related to 1 Samuel 23:24-29.

Psalm 57 is related to the incident at Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1-2) or at En Gedi (1 Sam. 24).

Psalms 142, another passage that reports David's being in a cave, could refer to either of the above references as well.

Psalms 60 is from 2 Samuel 8:8, 13; and 1 Chronicles 18:9-12.

Psalms 18 is almost identical to 2 Samuel 22.

Psalms 51 is based on the incident of David's sin recorded in 2 Samuel 11-12.

Psalms 3 seems to be connected with 2 Samuel 15-18.

Psalms 63 may be related to 2 Samuel 15:23.<sup>3</sup>

D. Purpose: The righteous pray to and praise Yahweh as they await the coming of God's Kingdom.

E. Bibliography

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4. Theological: Grogan, *Prayer, Praise & Prophecy: A Theology of the Psalms*.

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<sup>3</sup> Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 783.