

Introduction to the Psalms

(slides appear in the order inside
the merged presentation)

Thumbnail of Israel's History

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- Flood
- Abraham (2000 BC-ish)
- Sojourn in Egypt (ends around 1400BC or 1250BC with Exodus)
- Wanderings
- Transition from Moses to Joshua and entrance into the Land
- The Conquest
- The Judges
- Monarchy and the United Kingdom
- The Divided Kingdom
- Exile of Israel (N. Kingdom)
- Exile of Judah (S. Kingdom)
- Return under Ezra
- 2nd Temple Period (Zerubabel and Herod)
- Jesus
- Apostles
- First Jewish War
- Second Jewish War (expulsion from Jerusalem)

What is going on in the rest of the world at this
time...

What is going on in the rest of the world at this time... (1)

ANE (Ancient Near East)

- 22nd dynasty of Egypt (Sheshonk), declining power
- Assyrian supremacy
- First recorded strike by laborers in Egypt (inflation related)
- Famous Head of Nefertiti sculpture
- Regulations concerning the sale of beer in Egypt
- Wigs are used by aristocrats in Egypt and Assyria
- Later Pyramids of Egypt

What is going on in the rest of the world at this time... (2)

China

- Chinese cut ice and use for refrigeration
- Chinese dictionary with 40,000 characters
- Chinese math textbook, multiplications, geometry, equations
- Confucianism arises in China
- Fish farms in China
- Peking in existence
- Prohibition in China
- Fall of Shang Dynasty

What is going on in the rest of the world at this time... (3)

- Europe:
 - Iron Age moves to Europe (400 years later than ANE)
 - Etruscans settle Italy
- Greece:
 - Greek script/alphabet, based on Phoenician, later to become English
 - Iliad and Odyssey written
 - Unification of Attica under the Athenians; rise of city-states
- India: Caste system in India arises
- New World:
 - Mexican sun pyramid in Teotihuacan
 - Mounds of Poverty Point (LA).
 - No writing in the New World yet

Israelite Life at the Time of David

Israelite Life at the Time of David

- Villages and Cities
- Literacy
- The Homestead
- Tribal relations
- Government
- Religious life
- International relations

Nature of the Psalms

Nature of the Psalms (1)

“The Hebrew designation of Psalms is *Tehillim*, meaning "praises," a term that reflects much of the book's content (cf. Ps 145, title). Its name in Latin and English Bibles, however, comes from the Greek, *Psalmoi*, which means "twangings [of harp strings]," and then, as a result, songs sung to the accompaniment of harps. Its alternate title, *Psalterion*, means "psaltery," a collection of harp songs, from which comes the English term "Psalter."”

Nature of the Psalms (2)

“Psalms is organized into five books: 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, and 107-150; and, since the same psalm appears in more than one collection--e.g., Pss 14 and part of 40 (Book I) as 53 and 70 (Book II), and the latter halves of 57 and 60 (Book II) as 108 (Book V)--it seems likely that each compilation originally experienced independent existence.

Furthermore, since the last psalm of each collection was composed with terminal ascriptions that were designed for the book as a whole (41:13; 72:18-20; 89:52; 106:48; and the entire 150 th Psalm for Book V), it appears that the origins of these five concluding psalms provide clues for the compilation of their respective books.”

Nature of the Psalms (3)

“Each of the 150 psalms exhibits the formal character of Hebrew poetry. This consists, not primarily in rhyme, or even rhythmic balance, but rather in a parallelism of thought, whereby succeeding phrases either repeat or in some way elaborate the previous line. The poems vary in content.

Particularly significant are the 17 specifically messianic psalms, in the whole or in parts of which:

- Christ either is referred to in the **third** person (8:4-8; 72:6-17; 89:3-4, 28-29, 34-36; 109:6-19; 118:22; 132:11-12),
- is addressed in the **second** person
- (45:6-7; 68:18; 102:25-27; 110),
- or speaks himself in the **first** person (2; 16:10; 22; 40:6-8; 41:9; 69:4, 21, 25; 78:2).” [NBD]

Nature of the Psalms (4)

“It would be difficult to overestimate the significance, for Jew and Gentile, of the book of Psalms. Here are mirrored the ideals of religious piety and communion with God, of sorrow for sin and the search for perfection, of walking in darkness, unafraid, by the lamp of faith; of obedience to the law of God, delight in the worship of God, fellowship with the friends of God, reverence for the Word of God; of humility under the chastening rod, trust when evil triumphs and wickedness prospers, serenity in the midst of storm.”

Nature of the Psalms (5)

“The Hebrew poets were inspired to take these spiritual insights and experiences and make them the themes of their songs. But it should be remembered that ‘the Psalms are poems, and poems intended to be sung, not doctrinal treatises, nor even sermons’ (C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 1958, p. 2)—hence the Hebrew title of the Psalms, *tehillîm*, ‘songs of praise’—also that they were giving expression to the religion of Israel to which the psalmists were heirs, not merely to their personal religious experiences. So the Psalms belong to all believers, Jew and Gentile.”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1A)

The Poetry of the Psalms

“The chief characteristic of Hebrew poetry in the Bible is balance or symmetry, commonly called parallelism. Biblical poetry is also marked by the use of repetition, a fondness for alphabetical acrostics, and the employment of metaphor and simile.”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1B)

“Balance or Parallelism. A line of Hebrew poetry is made up of two parts or cola (singular colon) which may be designated A and B. For example:

- (A) When Israel went forth from Egypt,
 - (B) the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
- (114:1)

In this example, “Israel” is balanced by “house of Jacob” and “Egypt” by “a people of strange language.” Since the balancing words and phrases are synonymous and since the two cola parallel one another in meaning, this is called “synonymous parallelism.” The book of Psalms, and indeed the entire Hebrew Bible, is full of this kind of synonymous parallelism (e.g., Pss 4:2–6; 8:4; 19:1–2; 24:1–3; etc.).”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1C)

“Parallelism or balancing may extend to more than two cola, with whole lines balancing one another:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| (A + B) | The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; |
| (A' +B') | the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes (19:8; cf. vv 7, 9). |

In the examples given, the ordering of the words in the balancing cola is the same. In Ps 114:1 “Israel . . . Egypt” is balanced by “house of Jacob . . . people of strange language.” This order may be represented as A+B balanced by A'+B'.”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1D)

“The order may also fall into a chiastic pattern, where A+B is balanced by B’+A’ (cf. “When the going gets tough, the tough get going”). For example:

(A + B)	His mischief returns upon his own head,
(B’ + A’)	and on his own plate his violence descends (7:16)

(A + B)	Praise the Lord with the lyre,
(B’ + A’)	with the ten-stringed harp make melody to him (my trans., 33:2; cf. also 137:5–6).”

Introduction to the Psalms

Nature of the Psalms (6A)

The formation of the Psalter:

“It has been customary to describe the book of Psalms as ‘the hymn-book of the second Temple’, and such it undoubtedly was. The title is misleading, however, if it is interpreted to mean that all the psalms were written in the exilic or post-exilic periods. It is important to notice that this type of literature is not confined to the Psalter in the OT but is found in many different periods in Hebrew history. It is found among the Hebrews as early as the Exodus period (Ex. 15), and another example comes from a time subsequent to, but relatively close to, the invasion of Canaan under Joshua (Jdg. 5). Hannah’s psalm (1 Sa. 2:1-10) comes at the close of the Judges period.”

Nature of the Psalms (6B)

The formation of the Psalter:

“The **pre-exilic prophetic literature** also contains examples of psalm composition (cf., e.g., Ho. 6:1-3; Is. 2:2-4; 38:10-20; Je. 14:7-9; Hab. 3:1ff., etc.). And from the post-exilic period come such passages as Ezr. 9:5-15 and Ne. 9:6-39, which are strongly reminiscent of many of the psalms. Clearly, then, the Psalter is not an isolated literary phenomenon. Indeed, the same type of poetry is found among the Babylonians and the citizens of Ugarit as the Ras Shamra tablets testify. The OT Psalter is a collection of poems which are typical of a **literary form** which the Hebrews, in common with other cultures, used from at least the Exodus right up until the post-exilic or second Temple period.”

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The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1E)

“It is also possible that B may stand over against A, stating its opposite or standing in contrast to it. This is called antithetic parallelism:

- (A) The wicked borrows, and cannot pay back,
- (B) but the righteous is generous and gives;
- (A) for those blessed by the Lord shall possess the land,
- (B) but those cursed by him shall be cut off (37:21–22;
cf. 1:6; 20:8; 32:10, etc.).

Antithetic parallelism is especially characteristic of proverbial literature (e.g., Prov 10:1–12; Eccl 8:4; 10:2, 12).”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1F)

“Other Relationships between A and B. The cola A and B may relate to one another in a number of other ways:

A makes a statement, B provides a reason:

- (A) Blessed be the Lord!
- (B) for he has heard the voice of my supplications
(28:6).

A makes a statement: B balances with a question:

- (A) For in death there is no remembrance of thee;
- (B) in Sheol who can give thee praise? (6:5).”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1G)

“Other Relationships between A and B. The cola A and B may relate to one another in a number of other ways:

A asks a question; B gives an answer:

- (A) How can a young man keep his way pure?
- (B) By guarding it according to thy word (119:9).

A makes a statement; B balances with a quotation:

- (A) I had said in my alarm
- (B) “I am driven far from thy sight” (31:22).”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1H)

“Other Relationships between A and B. The cola A and B may relate to one another in a number of other ways:

A sets forth something “better than” B:

- (A) Better is a little that the righteous has
- (B) than the abundance of many wicked (37:16; cf. 118:8–9; 119:72; also Proverbs).

A varies; B repeats:

- (A) O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
- (B) for his steadfast love endures forever.
- (A) O give thanks to the God of gods,
- (B) for his steadfast love endures forever. (136:1–2 and throughout).”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1I)

“Other Relationships between A and B. The cola A and B may relate to one another in a number of other ways:

A makes a statement with an abstract noun; B sharpens the focus with a concrete noun:

- (A) Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
- (B) according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight (18:24).

A states the whole; B balances with a part which stands for the whole (synecdoche):

- (A) For thou dost deliver a humble people;
- (B) but the haughty eyes thou dost bring down (18:27).”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1J)

“Other Relationships between A and B. The cola A and B may relate to one another in a number of other ways:

A and B name two terms which mark boundaries in order to designate a totality (*merismus*):

- (A) The sun shall not smite you by day,
- (B) nor the moon by night (121:6).

A may provide a simile, B balancing with reality:

- (A) As a father pities his children,
- (B) so the Lord pities those who fear him (103:13; cf. 103:11–12; 42:1).”

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1K)

The Importance of Structure (e.g. Chiasm):

“Chiasm is a literary device of structure, wherein the ORDER of topics discussed is REVERSED after some pivotal point or couplet). Chiasm facilitates memory of the material, since the order of either 'half' of the structure can be 'calculated' from the other half, generally.” (Thinktank). Example:

Genesis 6.8-9: A chiasm in the Hebrew word order (BAW, 86)

Noah
found favor
in the eyes of the Lord
These are the generations of Noah
Noah was a righteous man
perfect he was
in his generations
with God
walked
Noah

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1L)

The Importance of Structure (e.g. Chiasm):

Genesis 11-22: The entire story of Abraham (BAW, 96)

- (A) Abraham's call; Promise of Seed (11:31-12.3)
- (B) Sojourn in Canaan (12.4-9)
- (C) Sojourn in Egypt; Denial of Sarai (12.10-20)
- (D) Separation of Lot; Manifestation of Land (13.1-18)
- (E) War on Sodom; Rescue of Lot by Abraham (14.1-24)
- (F) Covenant Made: Land (15.1-21)
- (G) Sarai's Effort (16.1-16)
- (H) Covenant Made: Abraham (17.1-14)
- (G') Sarah's Blessing (17.15-27)
- (F') Covenant Made: Seed (18.1-15)
- (E') Destruction of Sodom; Rescue of Lot by Angels (18-16-19.38)
- (C') Sojourn in Gerar; Denial of Sarah (20.1-8)
- (D') Manifestation of Seed; Separation of Ishmael (21:1-21)
- (B') Sojourn in Gerar (21.22-34)
- (A') Abraham's Test: Blessing of Seed (22.1-19)

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1M)

The Importance of Structure (e.g. Chiasm):

Genesis 6.10-9.19: The Flood Story

(G. J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative"
in VT,28 (1978): 336-48 , (cited in BAW p. 105)

A	Noah (10a)
B	Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10b)
C	Ark to be built (14-16)
D	Flood announced (17)
E	Covenant with Noah (18-20)
F	Food in the Ark (21)
G	Command to enter the Ark (7.1-3)
H	7 days waiting for flood (4-5)
I	7 days waiting for flood (7-10)
J	Entry to ark (11-15)
K	Yahweh shuts Noah in (16)
L	40 days flood (17a)
M	Waters increase (17b-18)
N	Mountains covered (18-20)
O	150 days waters prevail (21-24)
P	GOD REMEMBERS NOAH (8.1)
O'	150 days waters abate (3)
N'	Mountain tops become visible (4-5)
M'	Waters abate (6)
L'	40 days (end of) (6a)
K'	Noah opens window of ark (6b)
J'	Raven and dove leave ark (7-9)
I'	7 days waiting for waters to subside (10-11)
H'	7 days waiting for waters to subside (12-13)
G'	Command to leave the ark (15-17)
F'	Food outside the ark (9.1-4)
E'	Covenant with all flesh (8-10)
D'	No flood in future (11-17)
C'	Ark (18a)
B'	Shem, Ham, Japheth (18b)
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E	Covenant with Noah (18-20)	L'	40 days (end of) (6a)
F	Food in the Ark (21)	K'	Noah opens window of ark (6b)
G	Command to enter the Ark (7.1-3)	J'	Raven and dove leave ark (7-9)
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L	40 days flood (17a)	E'	Covenant with all flesh (8-10)
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Philippians 2.6-11

Christ – Divine Honor Relinquished

who in the form of God existing
not an advantage considered
his being equal with God

Christ – Servant Status embraced

but nothing he made himself
the form of a servant adopting
in likeness of men becoming

Christ – Humiliation embraced

and in appearance being found as man
he humbled himself
becoming obedient to death—

(Both) – The Ultimate Proof

and death of a cross

God – Humiliation REVERSED

therefore also exalted him God
and granted him the name
that's above ev'ry name

God – Servant Status REVERSED

so that in the name of Jesus
ev'ry knee may bow of those in heav'n
and on earth and under the earth

God – Divine Honor RESTORED

and every tongue may confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord
to God the Father's glory

Versification from Lohmeyer 1928, in *Moisés Silva, Philippians (2nd ed.; Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005)*, 93–94. **Label Boxes** by me.

Philippians 2.6-11 - An Early Hymn / Poem

“At this point (v.9) there is a radical change in **the hymn**.

“Now will come the reversal.

“Whereas the first half spoke of the unnamed Christ as the acting subject of all the verbs, now in the last half “it is God who acts and Christ is the object of the divine action” (Beare, 85).

“Whereas the first half of the hymn described Christ’s self-humiliation, the last half describes his exaltation by God, followed by his enthronement in the heavenly court, an imagery deriving from Psalm 110:1.”

[Gerald F. Hawthorne, Philippians (vol. 43; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2004), 123–124.]

The notion of parallelism and chiasm (1N)

The Importance of Structure (e.g. Chiasm):

The Story of Biblical History--a Chiasm?

- A Creation of Heavens and Earth (Gen 1-2)
- B Humanity's rebellion against God (Gen 3-11)
- C God's Kingdom on Earth (Gen 12-David)
- D The Apostasy of Humanity (Solomon-Malachi)
- E The Hidden Years (The Intertestamental period)
- F God enters History in the Messiah
- E' The Hidden Years (The "Church Age")
- D' The Apostasy of Humanity (cf. 2 Thess 2.3)
- C' God's Kingdom on Earth (Rev 20:1-6)
- B' Humanity's rebellion against God (Rev 20.7-9)
- A' Creation of New Heavens and Earth (Rev 21-22)