Fuller Theological Seminary

OT 507 – OT EXEGESIS: PSALMS

Winter 2014

SYLLABUS AND COURSE NOTES

Professor John Goldingay

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# Course Description

## John Goldingay’s contact information

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Faculty Support: Hannah Kelley. Payton 216. [hannahkelley@fuller.edu](mailto:hannahkelley@fuller.edu).

Office hours: I am usually available to meet with students before class, or on Tuesday afternoon, or before or after Wednesday morning chapel. Please call 626 405 0626 to arrange one of these times or another time. Or talk to me after class (but not in the break as I need it!). Or we can meet for happy hour at McCormick’s before class.

I communicate with the class by posting news on Moodle, and these postings are automatically emailed to your Fuller account. If this is not your default account, make sure it forwards into your default account. If you have problems with Moodle, email me (not the TA).

Call me John if you can, but anything else is fine if you can’t manage a Christian name.

## The TA:

 Daniel Freemeyer: [danielfreemyer@fuller.edu](mailto:danielfreemyer@fuller.edu)

You can talk to him about how to write the papers, and I especially encourage you to do so if you know you do not find it easy to write papers. Note that the ESL program and the Writing Center offer help in writing papers in good English (see the Student Handbook).

## 1 Course Description

A study of the Book of Psalms with particular reference to a cross-section of Psalms in Hebrew: 6, 30, 42, 51, 72, 89, 95, 100, 137, and 139. The whole of each psalm will be studied, but about ten verses each week will be designated for preparation in Hebrew (note that I have dropped 88 and 104 but added 137 to the psalms we will study in Hebrew).

## 2 Learning Outcomes

The Psalms are the Bible’s manual of examples and implicit instruction on the nature of praise and prayer, and studying them in their original languages enhances our understanding of them. By the end of the course students will have demonstrated that they have gained 1) insight into a range of approaches to the study of the Psalms that can enable the Psalms to illumine and develop our relationship with God as the church and as individuals; and 2) the ability to study the Psalms in Hebrew.

## 3 Assignments and Evaluation

The course requires 120 hours of work, which breaks down as follows.

### (a) Hebrew Homework (40.5 hours)

You do an average of 4.5 hours Hebrew homework for each class (not for the first class). For each week you produce

1. A word-for-word English translation of the text for that week. This will not be a translation that makes much sense but one that shows how the Hebrew itself works. Translate the complete word. So with a verb the right translation would be “he will give” not simply “give.” For a construct noun, the translation will be (for example) “sins of” not just “sins” – the “of” goes with the construct, not with the absolute noun it depends on. The idea is to show you understand how the Hebrew works.
2. An English translation that makes sense (a “smooth translation”), which you put line-by-line after your word-for word translation. There is an example of these two types of translation on page 16 (you don’t have to include the Hebrew in the version you turn in—just the two English versions).
3. If you have time, answer the questions relating to the psalm for the week on the page headed “Hebrew Homework Questions.” If you don’t have time to do this part of the homework , that is okay, but if you answer them okay, your grade for the homework will be increased by one point (for instance, instead of B**+** you will get A-).

Email these translations and the notes to [johngold@fuller.edu](mailto:johngold@fuller.edu) as an attachment by 6 p.m. on the Saturday before the class. Use your name and the homework number as the document title (e.g. “Smith 2a”; don’t just call it “Homework 2a” or the like – include your name). I will comment on and grade this homework on an ABCF scale. The average of your grade for this work contributes 50% to your final grade.

### (b) General Preparatory Homework (18 hours)

These are the items in the course notes headed homework 2b, homework 2c, etc. They are usually designed to take about two hours per week, thus 18 hours over the quarter – but sometimes they may be shorter, sometimes longer. Each week you post this homework on Moodle, also by 6 p.m. on the Saturday before the class. To post your homework, log onto Moodle and click and look for the appropriate homework assignment heading (e.g., “Homework 2a”). As the title of your posting, use your name. Don’t call it “Homework 2a” or the like, because that applies to everyone.) Post these homeworks as text not as an attachment.

### (c) Participation in online discussion groups (4.5 hours)

After 6 p.m. Saturday and before class you look through the homeworks posted on Moodle by the other people in your group (your group are the people whose homeworks you can see on Moodle) and make comments on most of them. Put your comments underneath the other person’s homework by clicking “reply” to their homework post. Spend 30 minutes doing this and write 75-125 words altogether. Some comments can be short (along the lines of “this is a good point” or “I don’t understand this” or “this is an interesting idea but what is the evidence?”). Some should be more substantial. It is fine to add to other people’s comments or respond to people’s comments on your homework, and all this would count towards your 75-125 words. You can be critical, but don’t be disrespectful or nasty; remember that written comments can come across more harshly than spoken comments.

Before class the TA and I look at the questions you raise in the homework and on that basis I decide on some topics to cover in the class time. The TA also looks at the homework more generally and puts a grade in the Moodle grade book. He may also add comments and/or email you with comments on your work. He will not treat it as if it were a paper—notes with bullet points are fine. He will look for indications that you have

carefully read the material set

thought about its significance

shown you have an inquiring, inquisitive mind

For the purposes of your final grade, the work is graded on a pass-fail basis, but to give you feedback the TA will give it a letter grade:

“A” notes are thorough, perceptive, and thought-provoking

“B” notes are good; they are thorough without having a “wow!” factor

“C” notes are not very thorough or perceptive but are okay

“F” notes are seriously incomplete or thin.

“L” notes were turned in late but are okay.

The ABC grading is purely for your feedback; I do not take it into account in generating your grade for the course. You simply have to get at least a C. (I used to take account of the homework grade in the final grade, but it makes many people anxious about the homework grades, so I made it just pass-fail and this reduces anxiety.) If the TA thinks a homework is an F, he will refer it to me for me to decide.

A very good homework can compensate for thin comments or vice versa. As long as you get at least C for the work as a whole, you pass for that day’s work.

### (d) Class (30 hours, plus Hebrew review sessions if you go to them)

Each class will last from 6.30 to 9.20 with a twenty-minute break from about 7.50 to 8.10. The first half of the class will focus on the Hebrew text for the week. The second half will look at general questions about the study of the Psalms.

Before the class, at 6.00, the TA will offer a Hebrew review class for people who may think they need to review their study of Hebrew language.

### (e) Exegetical Paper (4-6 pages, 2500-3500 words) (27 hours)

You write an exegetical study of one of the passages we study in class, or you choose another psalm or portion of a psalm (about ten verses) – but run your choice by me if you choose another psalm. Write 2500-3500 words (that includes footnotes but not the bibliography). Write the paper following the agenda set by pages 58-59 on “Studying a Text” and “Writing Your Exegetical Paper” (but you don’t have to follow the order of the items on these pages). It will thus involve these elements.

1. Translate the passage word-by-word, as for class
2. Add your own English translation that makes sense, as for class.
3. Comment on tricky translation points (e.g. as revealed by comparing translations).
4. Comment on the nature, structure, and message of the psalm as a whole.
5. Comment on the meaning of significant Hebrew words or phrases.
6. Show how reading the psalm in Hebrew contributes to understanding it.
7. Where modern translations paraphrase the psalm, show what the Hebrew literally says.

Start by working on your own with the Hebrew text, BDB and other such resources, and two or three translations. When you have done that work, then read some commentaries or other books to see if you learn extra things or to catch mistakes in what you have drafted. But don’t read the other books before doing your own work. And if you learn nothing from the other books, don’t worry about not referring to them. Many references do not turn a B paper into an A paper, and lack of references does not turn an A paper into a B paper.

Include your name in the file title. Use single space. Put your name, the paper title, and the course number (OT 507) on the paper but do not have a separate cover page. In keeping with the paragraph in the Student Handbook, use gender-inclusive language. Use good English; if English is not your first language, get a native English speaker to edit it. Use footnotes not endnotes or put references in brackets. Put a bibliography of works you consulted at the end.

Email the paper to [JohnGold@Fuller.edu](mailto:JohnGold@Fuller.edu) by 11.00 p.m. on Friday March 21. If you can produce a PDF, turn the paper in both as a regular Word-type document and as a PDF. I will comment on the paper by email using the “Comment” or sticky note facility in Word. If you turn in the paper early, I will grade it within three days. Then if you do not like the grade and wish to revise it and turn it in again, you can do so. The deadline for resubmission is also 11.00 p.m. on March 21.

If you don’t have MS Word, you can download software to enable you to read the comments from <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=95E24C87-8732-48D5-8689-AB826E7B8FDF&displaylang=en> or from <http://www.winfield.demon.nl/>.

In grading, I look for

* indications that you can work with Hebrew
* your interaction with the Bible
* your understanding of the issues
* your own intellectual engagement and critical thinking
* your personal reflection in light of your experience
* your use of insights from elsewhere (e.g., classes, books)
* the structure of the paper and the clarity and accuracy of your writing

An “A” paper will be thorough and perceptive in those ways – good on all fronts or brilliant on some. It will probably say something I have not thought before.

A “B” paper will be satisfactory in those ways, or it may have some very good aspects but some poorer ones. It will show hard work and understanding but not necessarily originality.

A “C” paper will be deficient in a number of fronts in a way that is not compensated by other strengths.

An “F” paper will be seriously deficient on a broad front.

The paper contributes 50% to your final grade.

There is a file of previous student papers on Moodle.

## 4 Policies

### (a) Homework: What If You Have a Crisis or Miss Doing the Homework or Miss Taking Part in the Group or If You Get a Fail?

There are no extensions for the homework schedule except in case of something unforeseeable and out of your control such as illness. In such a situation, email me (not the TA). If (for instance) you are out of town for a wedding or mission trip or interview, you must still post your homework and then your comments in accordance with the schedule.

Unless I have accepted an excuse such as illness, if you are late in posting your homework, your final grade for the course is reduced by .05 each time (e.g., 4.0 becomes 3.95). If your homework is more than a week late, that counts as not turning it in at all, unless you negotiate with me. Likewise, if you are late in posting your comments, your final grade for the course is reduced by .05 each time. If I excuse your posting a Hebrew homework until after the class because of something such as illness, I will grade this homework on a pass-fail basis (that is, your average for the Hebrew homeworks will be based on the other Hebrew homeworks, excluding this one).

If you do not post your homework or turn in your text work, or do not fulfill the comment requirement, or you get a fail for a particular week’s homework/comments or text work, your grade for the class is reduced by .1 (e.g., 4.0 becomes 3.9).

If you do not turn in work more than once, or do not fulfill the comment requirement more than once, or fail the homework/comments or text work more than once (or any combination of these), you fail the class.

Note that you negotiate with me not the TA about all these issues.

If you fail a week’s homework and/or comments, you may resubmit them directly to the TA within one week of receiving the fail grade; if they then pass, they are simply treated as if they had been late.

(I am sorry that some of these rules are legalistic; most of you won’t need to worry about them but I have to think out how we deal with marginal situations.)

### (b) Attendance at classes

I expect you to attend all classes. If you miss class, you do as follows:

1. work through three of the recommended commentaries on the text in question and send me five comments on things that struck you from them.
2. listen to the recording of the second part of the class on Moodle and send me five one-sentence comments or questions.

I will then email you to say you can check the attendance quiz on Moodle as if you were present. If you do not undertake the extra work, listen to the recording, and email me the comments, that will mean you have thus missed a class, your grade is lowered, and if you miss more than one class, you fail the course. You do not have to inform me if you expect to miss class.

### (c) Your grade for the course

Your grade is determined by the Hebrew text work (50%) and the exegetical paper (50%), but missing class or failing to post satisfactory preparatory homework/comments or posting preparatory homework/comments late means your grade is lowered as explained above. Failing more than one preparatory homework or missing more than one class means you fail the course. This works as follows.

If you miss a class and don’t do the extra reading and listen to the recording, and turn in your comments/questions, you forfeit .1 of your final grade. Likewise if you don’t turn in the preparatory homework or Hebrew preparation for a class you lose .1 of your final grade. If you turn in the homework or text work within one week after the class, this penalty is reduced to .05. If turn in your work late through an unexpected event such as illness, send me an email and I will excuse you from that reduction.

Suppose you get A- as your average for the text work and B+ for your paper. In GPA numbers this is 3.7 and 3.3, averaging 3.5. Normally I would then round up your letter grade to A-. But if you have missed (say) one class and one homework, the grade reduces to 3.3 and your letter grade for the course is B+.

Or suppose you get A for the text work and for the paper, which means 4.0. If you have missed one class, this reduces to 3.9. But rounded up, that is still A. If you missed one class and one homework, it reduces to 3.8, and that is rounded down to A-.

### (d) Incompletes

If you are cannot complete your paper because of a serious problem that was unpredictable and unavoidable, I can grant you an “Incomplete.” Download the form from the Registry, email me to get my agreement, turn in the form, and I will email the registry to confirm my agreement. All this action must be done before the end of the quarter. I do not have the power to grant an Incomplete on the basis of (e.g.) your agreeing to take on extra work or pastoral or mission commitments that you could have refused, or other busyness that you could have foreseen (see Student Handbook on “Academic Policies”). I do not grant Incompletes with regard to the homework or Hebrew work, because it is preparation for the class.

### (e) Academic Integrity Commitment

In doing your homework and writing your papers, I expect you to:

* Use your mind energetically in your study
* Look to see what scripture and other reading has to say to you personally
* Be faithful to God
* Not say anything that you do not think

I am required also to include the following seminary statement.

At the beginning of this course we, as faculty and students, reaffirm our commitment to be beyond reproach in our academic work as a reflection of Christian character. We commit to honesty in all aspects of our work. We seek to establish a community which values serious intellectual engagement and personal faithfulness more highly than grades, degrees, or publications.

Students are expected to review and understand the commitments to academic integrity as printed in the Student Handbook and the Seminary catalog. Some infractions can be addressed by personal confrontation and corrective counsel. The following violations of these commitments will be firmly addressed formally:

Submitting the same work in whole or in part in more than one course without the permission of the professor(s);

Submitting as one’s own work paper(s) obtained from another source;

Plagiarism: unattributed quotations or paraphrases of ideas from published, unpublished or electronic sources;

Unpermitted collaboration in preparing assignments;

Cheating on exams by any means;

Aiding another student on papers and tests in violation of these commitments.

Any of these violations will result in a failing grade on the assignment and possibly in the course, and will be reported to the Academic Integrity Group which may impose further sanctions in accordance with the Academic Integrity Policy. Evidence of repeated violations will result in a formal disciplinary process.

Academic Integrity Group. Contact: [aig-chair@dept.fuller.edu](mailto:aig-chair@dept.fuller.edu)

## 5 Course Schedule and Activities

### (a) Required Reading

Syllabus and Course Notes, posted on Moodle and at [www.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/goldingay](http://www.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/goldingay)

A copy of the Hebrew text of the OT (e.g., BHS), online at <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt2601.htm>

An NRSV and/or TNIV and/or CEB and/or one other translation (two translations altogether)

A Hebrew Lexicon (e.g., BDB)

A Hebrew Syntax (e.g., Williams or Waltke/O’Connor).

See the Biblical Division bibliography of Linguistic and Exegetical Books Required in the MDiv Program posted on Moodle and at <http://schedule.fuller.edu/sot/ecds/Ling-Exeg-Biblio.html>.

### (b) Recommended Reading

### Short commentaries:

Broyles, C. G. (brief scholarly evangelical commentary)

Brueggemann, W. (*The Message of the Psalms*; selective in the psalms it covers)

Eaton, J. H. (warm, Anglo-Catholic flavor; beware his stress on the king’s role in the cult)

Kidner, D. (pithy, insightful, without much time for critical insights)

Mays, J. L. (a bit impressionistic; available online)

Schaefer, K. (focusing on how the poetry works)

Rienstra, Marchienne Vroon. *Swallow’s Nest: A Feminine Reading of the Psalms*.

Rogerson, J., and J. W. McKay (scholarly, clear-headed, devotional)

Westermann, C. (*Living Psalms;* selective in the psalms it covers)

### Medium commentaries:

Anderson, A. A. (good for critical theories and trees rather than forest)

Augustine of Hippo. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers I, 8. Also http://<www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF1-08/TOC.htm> (very Christological)

Bratcher, R. G., and W. D. Reyburn (translators’ commentary)

Chrysostom, John

Gerstenberger, E. (form-critical introduction to each psalm)

Hossfeld, F.-L., and E. Zenger. *Psalms 2* and *Psalms 3* (Ps 51 – 150; a bit focused on the order of the Psalms)

Ibn Ezra, Abraham. *Commentary on the First Book of Psalms*. Brighton, MA: Academic Studies, 2009. (medieval Jewish translation)

Kirkpatrick, A. F. (old detailed commentary, useful for the Hebrew)

Kraus H.-J. (good on theology)

McCann, J. C. (*New Interpreter’s Bible*; a bit preoccupied with the order of the Psalms; available online)

Theodoret of Cyrus

Thomas Aquinas. http://www4.desales.edu/~philtheo/loughlin/ATP/

Weiser, A. (warm and theological; beware covenant preoccupation)

### Detailed commentaries:

Allen, L. C. /M. E. Tate/P. C. Craigie (Word series, with attention to theological issues; use revised editions)

Briggs, C. A. and E. G. (old though still useful for the Hebrew but inclined to rewrite the text)

Calvin, J. (wordy, but he is a great exegete and full of theological insight; available online)

Dahood, M. (beware his rewriting the Psalms as Ugaritic)

Goldingay, J. (sections on the set psalms are posted on Moodle)

Luther, M. (wordy; he is not a great exegete but he is a great theologian; available online)

Spurgeon, C. H. (huge compilation of his work and other people’s; available online)

### Other works (most treat sample psalms; often more useful than commentaries):

Adamo, D. T. “African Cultural Hermeneutics”. In *Vernacular Hermeneutics* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah) 66-90.

Anderson, B. W. *Out of the Depths* (wide-ranging introduction, now a bit dated)

Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria. *Letter to Marcellinus Concerning the Psalms*. http://[www.kensmen.com/catholic/psalmsathanasiusletter.html](http://www.kensmen.com/catholic/psalmsathanasiusletter.html)

Barth, C. *Introduction to the Psalms* (wide-ranging introduction, now a bit dated)

Bellinger, W. H. Psalms: *A Guide to Studying the Psalter*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

Bergant, D. *Israel’s Wisdom Literature: A Liberation-Critical Reading* 52-77

Blumenthal, D. R. *Facing the Abusing God* (Pss 27, 44, 109, 128).

Bonhoeffer, D. *The Psalms: Prayer Book of the Bible (*esp. good on “vindictive” psalms)

— *Meditating on the Word* (more general devotional introduction)

Brenner, A., and C. Fontaine (ed*.). Wisdom and Psalms*. (feminist studies; Pss 55, 109)

Brueggemann, W. *Israel’s Praise* (“doxology against idolatry and ideology”)

— *Praying the Psalms* (his first working out of his ideas)

— *Abiding Astonishment* (on the long story psalms)

— *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (collected essays)

Capps, D. S. *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling* (Psalms, Proverbs, and parables)

Crenshaw, James L. *The Psalms*.

Davidson, R. *The Courage to Doubt* (Job, Ecclesiastes, etc, as well as prayer psalms)

Day, J. *The Psalms* (JSOT Study Guide)

Ducquoc, C., and C. Florestan. *Asking and Thanking* (Concilium 1990/3) (on prayer)

Flint, Peter W., and Patrick D. Miller (ed.). *The Book of Psalms*. VTSup 99. (collected essays)

Gillingham, S. *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible* (thorough and detailed introduction)

Goldingay, J. *Songs From a Strange Land* (Pss 42—51)

— *Praying the Psalms* (brief introduction)

Gunkel, H. *The Psalms* (exposition of form criticism)

Hill, E. *Prayer, Praise, and Politics* (discussion of many psalms from this angle)

Jacobson, Rolf A., and Karl N. Jacobson, *Invitation to the Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.

Jacobson, Rolf A. (ed.). *Soundings in the Theology of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011.

Johnson, Vivian. *David in Distress.* New York: Clark, 2009. (focusing on the headings)

Johnston, R. K. “Practicing the Presence of God: The Wisdom of Psalms as Prayer”, in *To Hear and Obey* (F. C. Holmgren Festschrift, ed. B. J. Bergfalk and P. E. Koptak), 20-41.

Jones, E. *The Cross in the Psalms* (suffering there and its link with the NT)

Keel, O. *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (detailed treatment of symbolism in the Psalms)

Levison, John R., and Priscilla Pope-Levison (ed.). *Return to Babel*. Louisville: WJK, 1999. (Latin American, African, and Asian Perspectives on Ps 23)

Lewis, C. S. *Reflections on the Psalms* (idiosyncratic but perceptive as Lewis always is)

Magonet, J. *A Rabbi Reads the Psalms* (Pss 19, 22, 23, 25, 73, 90, 92, 145)

McCann, J. C. *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*. Nashville: Abingdon,

McCart, T. *The Matter and the Manner of Praise* (how metrical psalms and hymnody developed)

Metz, J. B., and K. Rahner. *The Courage to Pray* Part 1. (on prayer, illuminating the prayer psalms)

Miller, P. D. *Interpreting the Psalms* (including Pss 1, 2, 14, 22, 23, 82, 90, 127, 130, 139)

— *They Cried to the Lord* (huge study of prayer in scripture)

Mowinckel, S. *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (classic huge study)

Nehrbass, Daniel. *The Therapeutic and Preaching Value of the Imprecatory Psalms*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013.

Peterson, E. *Answering God* (esp on the Psalms that open the Psalter)

— *Where Your Treasure Is* (2, 14, 45, 46, 62, 77, 82, 87, 93, 110, 114)

Sheppard, G. T. “‘Enemies’ and the Politics of Prayer in the Book of Psalms” in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis* (N. K. Gottwald Festschrift, ed. D. Jobling and others) 61-82.

Sylva, D. *Psalms and the Transformation of Stress* (psalms for family therapy; 23, 62, 92, 107, 117, 131, 133)

Wenham, Gordon, J. *Psalms as Torah*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

Westermann, C. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (seminal work but hard to find your way round)

— *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message* (more down to earth version of his angle)

Witvliet, John D. *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship* (practical guide with resources)

Zenger, Erich. *A God of Vengeance?*

Beware of free material available on the internet other than that listed here. There’s usually a reason it’s free.

## An Invitation or Two

My wife Kathleen and I invite the class (and significant others) for dessert and conversation (theological or otherwise) after class on Monday January 27. We live at The Rose Tree condominiums, 111 South Orange Grove Boulevard, on the corner of Green Street, one block south of Colorado Boulevard, and within sight of the Norton Simon Museum. From Fuller, drive west on Walnut St to the end, turn left into Orange Grove Boulevard, drive for 400 yards, and turn right into Green Street to park. Key the number by our name at the door, near the traffic lights at the corner of Orange Grove and Green Street. Our unit is on the ground floor at the back on the left.

I’m very happy to meet to talk with you about how you are getting on at seminary, how you are getting on with God, how you are coping with life issues, and so on. You can see me after class to arrange a time, or call me at (626) 405-0626 (don’t e-mail as this is a complicated way to make an appointment).

## John’s Vita

1942 – born in Birmingham, England. My father was a printing machine minder, my mother a dressmaker. They didn’t go to church, but they had me baptized.

1953 – went on a scholarship to a prep school in Birmingham, learned Latin and Greek, discovered music (listening and singing), and got drawn to God.

1961 – felt called to the ministry, went to Oxford to study Theology, discovered the Old Testament, and met Ann at a Christian students retreat, when she was a medical student.

1964 – went to Bristol to seminary. Took Ann to hear the Beatles. Ann had multiple sclerosis diagnosed.

1966 – met David Hubbard. Was ordained into the Church of England ministry. Served in a parish in London. Married Ann and we had Steven. Discovered Leonard Cohen.

1970 – joined the faculty at St John’s Theological College (seminary) in Nottingham. We had Mark. Studied for a PhD while teaching. Ann trained as a psychiatrist. Served as associate pastor. Didn’t go to concerts because we were preoccupied with children.

1981 – Fuller asked me if I was interested in a job. Wrote some books.

1984 – took Ann to hear Eric Clapton (children are less of a problem). Ann’s multiple sclerosis started being more of a difficulty. Took Ann to hear John Wimber.

1988 – made principal of the seminary. Ann retired from psychiatry because of her ill-health. Fuller asked me if I was interested in a job. Took Ann to hear Van Morrison. Read Paulo Freire and stopped doing so much straight lecturing

1996 – Fuller asked me if I was interested in a job. Discovered where Fuller was. Steven married Sue (they live in St Albans, near London, with Daniel and Emma; Steven works for GM, Sue is a teacher). Took Ann to hear Bonnie Raitt.

1997 – Ann became wheelchair-bound. Mark married Sarah (they both then went to college in Devon). Came to Fuller. Went hang gliding. Took Ann to hear Sheryl Crow.

1999 – Ann lost the ability to speak or swallow. Family came to celebrate the millennium. Took Ann to hear Alison Krauss. Didn’t take her to hear Oasis.

2002 – became associate pastor at St Barnabas, Fair Oaks Avenue, Pasadena. Family came to celebrate my 60th birthday. Took Ann to hear Bob Dylan. Got into the habit of going to Malibu for lunch. Took Ann to hear the Rolling Stones

2009 – Ann died of pneumonia. Good for her to rest till resurrection day, shame for us. Went to hear U2.

2010 – met, dated, courted, engaged, and married Kathleen Scott. Whooo! Took her to hear Elvis Costello. Became priest-in-charge of St Barnabas, Pasadena.

# January 6: Introduction

## Class time:

6.30 Worship Psalm 1

“Be thou my vision.”

6.40 Lecture Introduction (pages 14-15)

7.50 Break

8.10 Hebrew study Psalm 100 (pages 16-18) (no preparation required)

If this is a psalm, what is a psalm? If this is a psalm of praise, how does a psalm of praise work? If this is worship, what is worship? If this is God, what is God like?

Words for steadfast love/commitment and truthfulness/steadfastness/faithfulness (*hesed,* ’*emet* and related words) in the Psalms

The psalm headings and their link with worship (pages 19-20)

9.00 Hebrew test To find out where you are in your understanding of Hebrew, so we can see what help the review class needs to give you. There is no passing or failing and it does not count toward your grade. It’s purely diagnostic.

### Further reading if you wish:

Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* 18-28, 48-78

Mays, J. L. “Worship, World and Power: An Interpretation of Psalm 100”, *Interpretation* 23 (1969), 315-30.

What One Class Had Been Told About the Psalms and Worship (on Moodle)

## Hebrew accents

You can download the bookmark that comes in BHS from   
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/37513773/Tabula-Accentuum>.   
Note that for Psalms you need not the “accentus communes” (common accents) but the “accentus poetici” (poetic accents). The disjunctive accents are the ones that mark a separation or pause in relation to the word that follows. The conjunctive accents are the ones that make a link with what follows.

The online list doesn't include the vertical line that comes in some versions of the Hebrew text. The bookmark has a note at the end that tells you this is called paseq (“separator”) and that it also has a disjunctive force in relation to what follows.  
This info is also in GK and in Jouon-Muraoka (with more explanation of the differences between the different accents).

## What Are The Psalms For?

### The Hebrew title: *Tehillim*, Praises.

The word is related to the word *hallelu-jah* (both come from the verb *halal*). But most of the Psalms are not praises…

### The Greek title: *psalmoi*:

The word *psalmos* means a song sung to a stringed instrument such as a harp or guitar (so it doesn’t refer to a praise or prayer song). From the word *psalm* comes the word “Psalter,” which denotes the Book of Psalms as a whole.

(A person who writes a psalm is a psalmist not a psalter. But a student did also invent the word “psalmster” to refer to a person who writes a psalm, and I think that is a good word, too.)

### Psalms as a book of teaching on prayer

The five books. Cf. Psalm 1? Examples and models (cf. the Lord’s Prayer).

Cf. Ephesians 5:18-20; 6:18-20: the best way into the Psalms’ own meaning? Corporate praise, thanksgiving, prayer.

Charles Lee Feinberg sees the invitation in Ps 100 as relating only to the millennial temple (see “‘Old Hundredth,’” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 100 [1946]: 53-66). Rather they are there to show us how to live with God now.

Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles* (e.g., pages 50, 54-56): the Psalms as where Christians have always learned to pray (till our age!). We should not assume we know how to pray. God wants to guide us.

But note that the Psalter teaches not by telling but by showing. The Psalms speak *from* God by showing us how to speak *to* God.

### Psalms as an evangelistic book

Jürgen Moltmann’s testimony (see *Experiences of God*, pages 6-9).

Walter Brueggemann: The psalms make it possible to talk about things that you can’t talk about anywhere else—they make it possible to be real.

### Psalms as a book for preaching

We need to take account of its setting in Scripture including the NT—but beware of letting the NT muffle this part of the Word of God

We need to take account of the way it itself communicates—not in the form of teaching but in the form of actual prayer and praise.

## A Sermon on Psalm 147

[Three times the Psalm urges us to praise God. But why should we? Three times it goes on to give us the reasons, and three times it refers to creation in doing that. The threefold structure of the Psalm thus gives you the structure for a sermon—it has

* three invitations to worship
* three reasons for worship (though the reasons in vv. 13-14 overlap with those in vv. 2-6)
* three appeals to aspects of God’s work in creation that provide backup for the reasons.]

### 1 Praise the Lord—because God is one who gathers the outcasts and heals the broken (vv. 1, 2-6)

Outcast/broken—sometimes how we are inside even if we look fine on the outside?

How many people in our society are also outcast/broken on the outside. This sets an agenda for us, because if God is one who gathers the outcast and heals the broken, so are we called to be. A criterion for evaluating political parties. [The sermon was preached at the end of the conventions season]

How do we know God can do that? God is sovereign in the cosmos (vv. 4-5). Some of Israel’s neighbors thought the stars decided what happened in the world. But who controls the stars? Israel’s God.

### 2 Sing to the Lord—because God is one who loves people who revere him and hope in him (vv. 7, 8-11)

God is not impressed by the humanly impressive (v. 10).

God responds to people who revere (not fear) him and look to him in hope (v. 11).

Another important insight in election season.

How do we know God does that? Look at the way God cares for and responds to wild animals and birds in their helplessness and vulnerability (vv. 8-9)

### 3 Praise your God—because God is one whose word runs swiftly (vv. 12, 13-20)

His word runs swiftly (v. 15)

Two images combined.

* The word of a powerful person is effective—God is like that.
* When a powerful person sends an aide to do something, that person runs!

He declares his word to his people (v. 19)

They are in a position to understand what he is doing in the world and to embody his vision for the world (cf. vv. 13-14)

If only we did! How do we know that about God’s word? Look at the effect of his word in nature. He sends out his word (v. 18): see what it does (vv. 15-18). That gives us grounds for encouragement about what God still do through his people.

So how good it is to sing praises to our God!

1. מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹדָה |100 Psalm

for thanksgiving/composition

composition; for thanksgiving

הָרִיעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:

the earth/all/for Yahweh/shout

shout for Yahweh, all the earth

1. עִבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה |

serve (object) / Yahweh / with joy

Serve Yahweh with joy

בֹּאוּ לְפָנָיו בִּרְנָנָה:

with resounding/ to his face/ come

Come before him with resounding

1. דְּעוּ כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים |

God/he/Yahweh/that/acknowledge

Acknowledge that Yahweh is God

הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ ולא [וְלוֹ קרי] אֲנַחְנוּ

we/ [qere and his] and not/made us/he

he made us and not we ourselves (and we are his)

עַמּוֹ וְצֹאן מַרְעִיתוֹ:

his pasture/and the sheep of/his people

his people and the sheep he pastures

1. בֹּאוּ שְׁעָרָיו בְּתוֹדָה

with thanksgiving/his gates/come

come to his gates with thanksgiving

חֲצֵרֹתָיו בִּתְהִלָּה |

with praise/his courtyards

to his courtyards with praise

הוֹדוּ־לוֹ בָּרֲכוּ שְׁמוֹ:

his name/worship/to him/give thanks

give thanks to him, worship his name

1. כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָֹה

Yahweh/good/because

Because Yahweh is good

לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ |

his commitment/forever

His commitment is forever.

וְעַד־דֹּר וָדֹר אֱמוּנָתוֹ:

his truthfulness/and generation/generation/and to

his truthfulness is to generation after generation

## Two Key Words in Psalm 100: *חֶסֶד* *hesed* and אֱמוּנָה *’emunah*

### חסד hesed commitment

Nearly half the OT occurrences are in the Psalms

136!

33:5 – the world is full of Yhwh’s *hesed* (also 18, 22)

36:5, 7, 10 36:5 – Yhwh’s *hesed* extends to the heavens

103:4, 8, 11, 17

89:1, 2, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49

23:6 – God’s goodness and *hesed* chase us

57:3

130:7

145:8 – Yhwh is slow to get angry and of great *hesed*

NRSV most often translates *hesed* as “steadfast love,” but also (e.g.) constant love, devotion, faithfulness, favor, kindness, love, loyalty or mercy. The word denotes an extraordinary act of self-giving. It is the nearest word to Greek *agape*. It is used in two chief connections:

1. It can refer to an extraordinary act of generosity or graciousness or mercy that one person shows to another when they are under *no obligation* to do so – there is no prior relationship between the parties. In this sense, it overlaps with grace or favor (*hen* in Hebrew - *charis* in Greek). Grace/favor maybe refers to the attitude, *hesed* to the action.
2. It can also refer to the extraordinary act of self-giving or loyalty or mercy that a person shows to someone else when they *are already in relationship* with them. In this sense, it overlaps with faithfulness (‘*emet* or ‘*emunah* in Hebrew). Faithfulness then denotes a general quality, *hesed* a faithfulness that goes beyond anything one might have expected.

*Hesed* is also translated “covenant love,” and it does sometimes link with covenants. But it can exist outside of any covenant relationship, and it can denote a loyalty that goes beyond anything that a covenant would demand (e.g., staying faithful when the other party is not faithful).My suggestion is that “commitment” is an English word that covers both senses of the Hebrew word. The word commitment never comes in the NRSV at all, to translate any Hebrew or Greek words!

Hardly any human references; but note the use of חָסִיד (*hasid* – cf. the hasidim) to refer to a human beings – a committed person

30:4; 31:23; 32:6

### אֱמוּנָה ’emunah steadfastness, reliability, truthfulness, faithfulness, faith, truth

Nearly half the OT occurrences are in the Psalms

36:5

89:1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33, 49

Cf. ’emet (אֶמֶת): nearly one third of OT occurrences are in the Psalms: e.g., 25:5, 10; 43:3; 57:3

Human attribute

26:3

15:2 – speak the truth in the heart

19:9 – God’s decisions are true and right

30:9 – worship is declaring God’s faithfulness

43:3 – God’s faithfulness personified

119:43 – God’s word as true

hesed and ’emunah/’emet together in Psalms 25:10; 26:3; 40:10, 11.

## “Worship,” “Praise,” “Prayer”

### Words translated “worship”:

*דרשׁ darash* = have recourse to, consult, seek guidance and help from (Ezra 4:2; 6:21).

*ירא yare’ =* revere (fear) (Joshua 22:25)

עבד ‘*abad* = serve (2 Sam 15:8; Ps 102:22; Isa 19:21, 23)

*שׁחה shachah* = bow prostrate (e.g., Ps 5:7; 22:27; 29:2; 66:4; 95:6; 96:9; etc, etc)

*שׁרת sharat =* minister, serve (less menial than ‘*abad*) (Ezek 20:32)

*סגד sagad* (Aramaic) = bow prostrate (Dan 3, eleven times)

### Words translated “praise”

*הלל halal* = make a lalalalala noise (Ps 148; 149; 150) (cf. the title *tehillim*)

*זכר zakar =* cause people to think about, commemorate (Ps 71:16)

*זמר zamar =* make music (Ps 21:13; 30:12)

*ידע yada*‘ *=* acknowledge (Ps 30:9; 33:2)

*נוה nawah =* beautify (Exod 15:2)

*רנן ranan =* make a n-n-n-n noise (Deut 32:43)

*שׁבח shabach =* commend (Ps 63:4; 117:1; 147:12)

### Words translated “pray”:

אמר ’*amar =* say (Ps 38:16)

אנה/נא ’*annah/na*’= “please!” (Gen 24:12; Exod 4:13; 32:32; 33:13, 18; Jonah 4:2)

עתר *‘atar* = ask for something (only used of asking God) (Gen 25:21; Exod 8:29, 30)

*פגע paga*‘ = meet with someone on someone else’s behalf (Job 21:15; cf. Isa 53:12)

*פלל palal* = intervene on someone’s behalf, intercede (Gen 20:7, 17; Num 11:2; 21:7; Ps 5:2)

*שׁאל sha*’*al =* ask (Ps 122:6)

*צלא tsala*’ (Aramaic) = bow down (Dan 6:10; Ezra 6:10)

*שׁחה* is complicated. It comes in the form השׁתחוה and I follow BDB in thinking it is hitpalel from *שׁחה shachah*, which means “bow down”—so it means “bow oneself down.”

HALOT thinks it comes from חוה of which it is a hitsaphel (a verb form known in Ugaritic but not in Hebrew), with the same meaning.

### The Shape of Praise

A praise psalm is an expression of praise and worship for who God is and for the great things God has done and given. See Psalms 8, 19, 29, 33, 47, 48, 65, 66, 68, 78, 87, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 104, 105, 111, 113, 114, 117, 122, 134, 135, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150.

The two features of a hymn (Gunkel):

(1) Invitation/determination to worship

(2) Reasons for worship: who God is, what God has done for the people  
 also indirect—creation, God’s word, Jerusalem, the temple

## The Psalm Introductions and Their Link with Worship

The introductions to Psalms make statements such as “The leader’s. With strings. On the eighth. A composition. David’s” (Ps 6) and “The leader’s. On the Gittite. A composition. David’s” (Ps 8). Those examples show that many of these introductions are difficult or impossible to understand. There are indications that they are of later date than the psalms themselves, but they are just as much part of the text as anything. In fact, they have verse numbers in printed Hebrew Bibles.

* Note that there is a cause of confusion here. If the Hebrew Bible gives the introduction its own verse number, the succeeding verse numbers will be different from the English verse numbers, sometimes by two. Thus Psalm 51:1 in English Bibles corresponds to Psalm 51:3 in the Hebrew Bible. Sometimes modern books will give both numbers, giving the reference as Psalm 51:1 [3] or Psalm 51:3 [1]. Sometimes they will give just one number and you may have to “translate” it. The higher number is always the Hebrew one, the lower number the English one.
* Note also that the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, makes Psalms 9 and 10 one Psalm (as it originally was), so Psalm 11 (Hebrew) then equals Psalm 10 (Greek), etc., till Psalm 147. The Latin Bible (the Vulgate) follows the Septuagint numbering, as then do some Roman Catholic English translations. But most English Bibles follow the Hebrew for the numbers of the psalms.
* Beware of the fact that many English translations provide psalms with extra introductions. E.g., one edition of the NRSV calls Psalm 6 “Prayer for recovery from illness” and Psalm 8 “Divine majesty and human dignity.” These are not part of the biblical text.

There are two main indications that the introductions are later than the content of the psalms.

* Sometimes the introductions look like adaptations. For instance, Psalms 120—34 are “Songs of Ascents”—that is, they were used for pilgrimage (as people “went up” to Jerusalem) or for procession (as they “went up” to the temple itself). But these psalms do not look as if they were written for either of these purposes. More likely these introductions reflect changing ways in which the psalms were used. Similarly, Psalm 30 has an introduction that links it with the temple dedication (the word is *hanukkah*, which is the name of the festival that celebrates the restoration of the temple after its defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes in the 160s B.C., referred to in Daniel—or it might be the dedication in Ezra 3). Psalm 92 has an introduction that links it with the Sabbath, and Psalm 100 has one that links it with the thank-offering, but none of these psalms look as if they were originally composed for those occasions.
* The Septuagint Psalter and the Qumran Psalter have extra introductions (e.g., Psalm 95 is “of David”)—which suggests that introductions were still developing.

The introductions we can understand suggest that they relate to how the psalms were used in worship:

1. As just noted, some refer to liturgical occasions such as the temple dedication or the thank-offering (e.g., 30, 100)
2. Some refer to temple ministers/choirs/choirmasters (e.g., 6, 8, 139)
3. Some seem to refer to ways of singing or tunes (e.g., 6, 8, 88)
4. Some seem to refer to instruments (e.g., 6)
5. Some seem to denote types of Psalms (e.g., 6, 8, 88, 89).

In general, they are like the introductions to hymns and songs that come in our hymnbooks, such as “common meter” or “capo on second fret.” It is natural that these are difficult to understand in a different culture, but it is significant that in general they point us to worship as the Psalms’ context.

* The word Selah is also a puzzle, and there are many theories about it. The word means something like “Rise,” but we don’t know what kind of “rise.” The best theory is that it was what David said when he broke a string. This is the best theory because there is no logic about when you break a string, and there is no logic about the occurrence of Selah.

## Psalms of David: or David-Psalms

The most frequent introduction to psalms is the expression “David’s.” That sounds as it if means David composed the psalm. But Psalms 6 and 8 (for instance) are described both as “the leader’s” and as “David’s.” It’s hardly the case that the choirmaster and David both composed the psalm. English translations disguise the problem by translating “for the leader” and “of David,” but “of” and “for” are the same Hebrew expression each time, the preposition *le*.

As in English, “of” or “for” could have various meanings. To open up the possibilities further, in the OT “David” doesn’t always denote David ben Jesse. It can denote whoever is the current Davidic king, or denote a coming David (see Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos 3:5). Here are some of the meanings of *le* according to the Brown, Driver and Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, and the way they might apply in this context:

“to” addressed or offered to the Davidic king, present or future?

“belonging to” e.g., “belonging to the Qorahites” (42) – compare “Sankey and Moody’s Hymns” (only a few of which were written by Ira Sankey or Dale Moody)?

“for” for the Davidic king to use or learn from?

“on behalf of” to be prayed on his behalf?

“about” about the future Davidic king, the Messiah?

“by” (Habakkuk 3:1 is the only passage outside the Psalms where the preposition might suggest authorship—usually the OT uses the genitive)

The lexicon implies that the meaning of the phrase changed over the centuries. It might originally have suggested that a particular psalm is for the present king, then have suggested it related to the future king, then have been understood to denote authorship when people wanted to associate the psalms with someone famous – which also encouraged people to link some psalms with particular incidents in David’s life. These long introductions (e.g., Psalm 51) must be referring to David ben Jesse, though they could still be “to”, “for”, or “on behalf of” him (see further #426). I use the translation “David’s,” which leaves the meaning open.

One argument that makes people assume that David wrote the Psalms is the notion that Jesus refers to them as David’s, but Jesus actually only refers to one Psalm as David’s – Psalm 110 (Mt 22:43). Other parts of the NT do describe Psalms 16, 32, 69, and 109 as David’s. The NT also describes Psalms 2 and 95 as David’s, whereas the OT itself doesn’t make the link. This fact in itself hints that the NT is often speaking conventionally (as when it speaks as if the sun goes round the earth) – it is not pronouncing on the authorship question.

If we don’t assume David wrote all the Psalms, it gets us out of the problem of understanding how he could have been a combination of Napoleon (great general), JFK (great leader and womanizer), and also Henri Nouwen or Eugene Peterson (great expert on spirituality). It also clarifies that accepting the psalms as the word of God and understanding and using them doesn’t depend on knowing who wrote them—as is the case with Christian prayers and hymns. Their power and authority do not come from their being written by someone important but from their having been true prayers and praises that God accepted.

Often the power and meaningfulness of our hymns derives from their having been the expression of real people’s personal turning to God (e.g., Charlotte Elliott writing “Just as I am”), which our experience resonates with even if we don’t know what their experience was. It’s best to assume that we know nothing about who wrote the Psalms and that this knowledge is unnecessary to using them (though you could consider this possibility: outside the Psalms many main prayer-composers are women—e.g., Ex 15:21; Judg 5:1; 1 Sam 2:1—so maybe inside the Psalms, too). So don’t take Davidic authorship as a hermeneutical key to understanding the Psalms. Just don’t think about the authorship question, and in preaching don’t refer to it.

# January 13: How to Worship Together (The Hymns or Songs of Praise)

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

### Preparatory Homework:

(Note that the numbers of the homework such as Homework 2a correspond to the weeks of the quarter, so there is no Homework 1.)

Post all your homeworks each week two days before class, before 6.00 p.m. Saturday. Note that you email your Hebrew homework but post your other homework on Moodle.

This week, post on Saturday 11th itself (not before Saturday) because I won’t be able to allocate the groups until Friday 10th. In future weeks, you can post as early as you wish.

Homework 2a: Hebrew study of Psalm 95:1-7a (page 22)

Homework 2b: Read Psalm 104.

Read Amenophis’s rather similar Hymn to the Sun (Aton), posted on Moodle.

Fill in page 23 and post your answers

Before class, comment on the homework 2b postings of other people in your group

### Class time:

6.30 Worship Psalm 100

“Great is thy faithfulness”

6.40 Hebrew study Psalm 95

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture How to Worship Together (pages 24-27)

Glory and shalom in the Psalms (page 28)

### Further reading if you wish:

Peterson, *Answering God* 1-67.

Brueggemann, *Israel’s Praise* 1-53.

von Rad, G. “There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* 94-102.

## Hebrew Homework Questions 2a: Psalm 95:1-7a

1 לכו [*lěkû*]: this is an irregular verb. In what way is it irregular? What would be its form if it were regular?

נרננה [*něranněnâ*]: this is a cohortative verb. What does that mean? And how is its form different from an imperfect?

Translations have “sing” or “sing for joy.” What is wrong with that?

ישענ צור [*ṣûr yiš ‘ēnû*]: translations have “the rock of our salvation.” What would be a more idiomatic translation, and why?

2 פניו [*pānāyw*]: translations have “presence,” but what is it more literally?

4 אשר [*’ăšer*]: this is usually only a prose word. See if a grammar gives you any clue about what it is doing here.

5 הוא [*hû’*]: What is the significance of this word here?

6 נשתוה [*ništaḥǎweh*]: Note that there are two different ways of parsing this word.

(a) hitpael of שׁחה [*šāḥâ*]. If that is right, why does the hitpael have the form that it does?

(b) hishtapel of חוה (*ḥāwâ*), cognate with a similar Arabic verb. Hishtapel is an Ugaritic-style verb form.

Translations have “worship.” What is wrong with this translation?

7 עם [*‘am*]: BHS notes that one manuscript and the Syriac have עַמּוֹ [*‘ammô*], the Targum implies the same. How would you then translate the line?

BHS then redivides the line so that “his hand” goes into the verse 7b, and it makes another emendation; just focus on the way MT works.

## Homework 2b: Psalm 104 and Amenophis’s Hymn to the Sun (Aton)

Read Psalm 104 and read Amenophis’s Hymn (on Moodle) and wrote 150-250 words on the following questions

1. How does Psalm 104 understand God and the world and their relationship?
2. How does Amenophis’s Hymn understand God and the world and their relationship?
3. What are the significant points of similarity between the psalm and Amenophis’s Hymn?
4. What are the significant differences?
5. Any questions about this study that you would like me to cover in class?

## The Hymns, or Psalms of Praise

### Great names in the modern study of the psalms: (1) Robert Lowth

R. Lowth—*Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753)

J. L. Kugel—*The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (1981)

W. G. E. Watson—*Classical Hebrew Poetry* (1984)

R. Alter—*The Art of Biblical Poetry* (1985)

D. L. Petersen/K. H. Richards—*Interpreting Biblical Poetry* (1992)

Psalm 95:

One verse is generally the unit of thought (though English verse-divisions may obscure this). There aren’t fixed “strophes” (paragraphs) though there can be development through a sequence of verses.

Verses generally divide into two parts that complement each other in some way: complete/repeat/intensify/contrast/ clarify... (“parallelism”). Hence the point of saying psalms responsively/antiphonally, by half verses.

The two halves of the verse may then need interweaving: e.g., 42:8.

Verses tend to have a fixed number of (important) words—most often 3:3. The interest is thus spread through the line: compare rap (also Gelineau Psalms), and contrast Anglican chant (even though the latter ultimately derives from the way psalms were sung in the synagogue).

The second most common regular rhythm is 3:2—for prayer rather than praise (more “limping”). E.g., 119:25-32; and Lamentations.

### Great names in the modern study of the psalms: (2) Hermann Gunkel

Traditionally, people tried to treat the psalms historically, as you would (e.g.) the prophets, and thus to connect each psalm with a specific situation in the life of Israel: e.g.,

42—43 somebody’s exile

44 some military defeat

45 some royal marriage

46 some invasion and deliverance

But which? Commentators guess, but there’s no way of telling (Psalm 137 the one exception?)

Hermann Gunkel provided the way out of this impasse: see his introduction *The Psalms* (1930: but his creative work dates from 1906 onwards). He suggested

(a) looking at the psalms against their recurrent social context (*Sitz* *im* *Leben*) rather than their once-for-all historical context

(b) comparing the various examples of the different ways of speaking to God that appear in the Psalter (form criticism).

Hymns, Laments (Individual and Corporate), Thanksgivings (Individual and Corporate)

(Also some psalms that speak from God to us or to the king (wisdom psalms, royal psalms)

### Great names in modern study of the psalms: (3) Sigmund Mowinckel

Gunkel’s blind-spot/dilemma:

* the Psalms look like temple songs and prayers (e.g., references to singing, processing, making music, coming into temple...)
* the Psalms reflect real spiritual life
* but we “know” that temple worship was cultic and dead, so they can’t be temple songs and prayers
* so the Psalms must have been later imitations of temple songs and prayers

Mowinckel spotted that Gunkel’s prejudices had led him astray. The Psalms’ setting is indeed the worship of the people of God—what he calls the cult (he does not mean heretical cults).

The cult is a general phenomenon appearing in all religions, even the most “anti-cultic” Protestant sects and groups. It is indeed an essential and constitutive feature of a religion, that in which the nature and spiritual structure of a religion is most clearly manifested….Cult or ritual may be defined as the socially established and regulated holy acts and words in which the encounter and communion of the Deity with the congregation is established, developed, and brought to its ultimate goal. In other words: a relation in which a religion becomes a vitalizing function as a communion of God and congregation, and of the members of the congregation amongst themselves.

(*The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1951/1962, p. 15; but this is the final statement of a position expounded from the 1920s)

### (4) Walter Brueggemann

Worship is world-creating. It denies that the world we experience outside church is the ultimate world, declares that the real world is one where Yahweh reigns, and sends you out into that world to make that true. See his *Israel’s Praise* (e.g., 39-43, 51-53)*.*

Psalm 47 as an example

## Praise God for Creation: Psalm 104

Models for understanding God’s relationship with creation in Psalm 104

God the clockmaker who started it off and then leaves it

God the farmer who keeps looking after it, personally involved on an ongoing basis

God the energy or system of nature—including volcanoes

The “God of the gaps” who is the explanation for the miraculous/disastrous things that happen

From other Psalms: creation means

* the powers of chaos cannot reassert themselves: the world is secure (Ps 93)
* the cosmos continually declares God’s glory (Ps 19)
* the mighty creator gets involved with mere human beings! (Ps 8)

As creator, God is the God of everyday life and of my everyday experience and need.

In the Psalms God is giver, healer, and deliverer more than lawgiver and judge.

God is not just the God of the past (history) and God of the future (eschatology):

God is God of the present—of worship and everyday life.

## Links Between the Psalms and Particular Worship Festivals?

While the content of the Psalms justifies the belief that the Psalms were used in the worship of the temple, they give less concrete indications of links with *particular* worship occasions, and there have been a number of theories about links with different festivals in the year. We know the shape of Israel’s worship year (with which we can compare the church’s year) from Exodus 12; Leviticus 23; Deuteronomy 16 and 31; see also Esther 9; John 10:22

Passover

Unleavened Bread (Mar/Apr)

Purim (Feb)

Hanukkah (Dec) Pentecost (May/Jun)

New Year

Day of Atonement Ninth of Ab (August)

Tabernacles (Sept/Oct)

Many major writers on the Psalms assume that many psalms would link with one of the key worship festivals (like hymns linking with Christmas/Easter). They usually assume this would be Tabernacles/Booths, *the* feast (Sukkot; cf. 1 Sam 1). But they then disagree on the significance of this festival.

1. Sigmund Mowinckel saw it as a celebration of Yahweh’s being king. Psalm 96 makes a good starting point for appreciating this understanding.
2. Artur Weiser reckoned that Mowinckel was too influenced by the nature of Babylonian worship, which he read into the Old Testament. Weiser suggested that the festival was rather a celebration of the Sinai covenant. Psalm 95 then makes a good starting point (as it combines worship with a challenge to obedience); and Deuteronomy 31 does require a reading of the Torah at this festival.
3. Hans-Joachim Kraus reckoned that actually David and Jerusalem are more central to the Psalms, and saw the festival as a celebration of Yahweh’s commitment to David and Zion. Psalm 132 then makes a good starting-point, and 2 Samuel 7 gives you the story that would lie behind the festival.

But why assume that psalms were especially used at this one festival? Would there not be psalms sung at Passover (cf. the later use of Psalms 113—114 before the meal, 115—118 after the meal—see Mark 14.26)? At Pentecost? On the Day of Atonement? On the Sabbath? And why assume that a Psalm that refers to a theme must link with that theme’s festival? Cf. our hymns: e.g., “O come all ye faithful” connects with Christmas, but “When I survey the wondrous cross” doesn’t especially connect with Easter.

In my view, the general idea that the psalms link with worship is secure, but we cannot be specific beyond that. So when you use Mowinckel’s, Weiser’s, and Kraus’s fine works, beware of this element in them.

## How Form Criticism Helps

* It helps us to see what is characteristic of particular ways of praying, and thus to perceive the central features of a Psalm.
* It reminds us that the psalms were the prayers of ordinary Israelites, “perhaps some just like me,” not just “a few lustrous heroes”—as a student put it in a paper.
* It also helps us to see the distinctive features of a particular Psalm — the features it has that are uncharacteristic.

E.g., Ps 95 as compared with Ps 100.

For verses 7-11 see

Hebrews 3—4: the same challenge comes to us at the End

Genesis 2: the rest is the rest God intended from the Beginning

1 Kings 8:56: they entered into that rest in the land

But Psalm 95:7-11: that rest still lies ahead

## Anyone Can Write a Psalm of Praise

The psalms of praise are there for us to use as they are, but also for us to learn how to praise. So if we want to praise God, how do they suggest we go about it? You don’t have to include all these aspects or to keep to this order. This is a point of departure. Decide what you need/want to say in the light of these possibilities. But don’t just say what your instincts tell you—we are seeking to learn to pray in a scriptural way.

Tell us what you are going to do and/or invite us to join you

Declare the reasons why God is praiseworthy

—what God always is, key things God has done for his people, key gifts of God to us…

Remember not to be individualistic—this isn’t about what God has done to you personally, or about what you feel

Express yourself in images

Reflect your own experiences but do so indirectly, so other people can identify with them

Say things more than once, in different words

## Glory in the Psalms

You are my glory – i.e., the one who sees to my honor 3:3; 21:5; 62:7; 112:9

Divinely-given human glory 8:5; 73:24 (?); 84:11; 149:5

Fading human splendor 49:16, 17

You are my glory – i.e., the one I honor 4:2

God’s glory 138:5; 145:5, 11-12

The heavens declare God’s glory 19:1; 97:6

The glorious King 24:7-10

The glorious God thunders 29:3

Abandoning God’s glory! 106:20

God’s glorious name 72:19

God’s glory above the heavens 113:4

God’s glory dwells in the heavenly temple 29:9

God’s glory dwells in the earthly temple 26:8; 63:2

God’s glory needs to be shown 57:6, 11; 72:19; 79:9; 85:9; 102:15, 16; 104:31; 108:5; 115:1

Need to proclaim God’s glory 96:3

Need for human beings to give God glory 29:1, 2; 66:2; 96:7, 8

(Note – some occurrences of *kabod* may refer to the heart (lit., “liver”) – 7:5; 16:9; 30:12; 57:8; 108:1)

## Shalom in the Psalms

Prosperity 37:11; 72:3, 7; 73:3; 147:14

Well-being, welfare 29:11; 35:27; 85:8, 10; 119:165; 122:6, 7, 8; 125:5; 128:5

Health 38:3; 55:18

Good relationships 28:3; 34:14; 35:20; 37:37; 41:9; 55:20; 69:22; 120:6, 7

Hard to find instances of *shalom* meaning peace of mind?

(Peace as absence of war e.g., Ecc 3:8)

# January 20: How to Pray for Ourselves (The Prayer Psalms [i])

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

### Preparatory homework:

Homework 3a: Hebrew study of Psalm 89:2-5, 39-43 (in English Bibles, 1-4, 38-42)

(page 30)

Homework 3b In light of our study of praise psalms, on page 31 write a praise psalm that works in a similar way to the ones in the Psalter

Homework 3c: Read Walter Brueggemann, “The Costly Loss of Lament” (*Journal for the Study of the OT* 36 [1986]: 57-71; available on Moodle and online in the library or as print copy); fill in page 32 and post it.

Post homeworks 3b and 3c.

Before class, comment on the postings of other people in your group

### Class time:

6.30 Worship: Psalm 44

“Standing in the Need of Prayer”

6.40 Hebrew study: Psalm 89

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture How to Pray for Ourselves (pages 33-34)

Words for Compassion, Covenant, Redemption/Restoration, Fear/Reverence in the Psalms

### Further reading, if you wish:

Anderson, *Out of the Depths* 63-105.

## Hebrew Homework Questions 3a: Psalm 89:2-5, 39-43

2 חסדי (*ḥasdê*): translations have “steadfast love” or the like. So why is the word plural?

עולם (*‘ôlām*): translations have “forever.” But does the word literally mean, and what are they adding to make it mean that?

How is the word order in v. 2a unusual and what does its effect?

3 כי (*kî*): translations omit this word. What does it mean in the context?

חסד (*ḥesed*): translations have “your” steadfast love (or something similar). What is the justification for that?

יבנה (*yibbāneh*): the verb is niphal. What are two possible meanings of the niphal in this context?

What is a word-for-word translation of v. 3b and what is the point of the unusual word order?

BHS suggests reading תִכּׁן [*tikkōn*] instead of תָכִן [*tākin*]. What will then be the meaning?

4 כרתי (*kārattî*): translations have “made [a covenant].” What is it literally? (and any idea why?)

לבחירי (*libîrî*): translations have “with my chosen.” What is it literally, and what might this imply?

5 ובניתי (*ûbānîtî*): translations make this a future but the verb is perfect. How do translations know it is future?

39 אתה (*’attâ*): this word is unnecessary. Why is it there?

ותמס (*wattim’ās*): the verb is imperfect: why do translations translate it as past?

## Homework 3b: Your Praise Psalm

## Homework 3c: The Costly Loss of Lament

Write five separate sentences of concrete comment on key issues raised by the article (number them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). These can include (for instance) observations on something you find illuminating, or comments on something you disagree with, or questions about something you find puzzling.

## How to Pray for Ourselves

### The features of a prayer psalm as an expression of hurt and plea for help (e.g., Psalm 22)

Invocation of God

Recollection of God’s deeds in the past (painful but hopeful.)

Lament: I/we they you

Confession of trust

Plea: hear   
save   
punish

Vow of praise

Transition to praise

For the sharp transition cf. Pss 12; 60; and 1 Sam 1—2

The role of prophets in Israel’s worship (“cultic prophets”):

Foretelling — bringing God’s promises: Psalms 12; 60

Forth-telling — bringing God’s warnings: Psalms 50; 82

Thus you can’t assume a positive answer to a prayer (even if you are a prophet): see Jer 14—15 (where Jeremiah prays this way); Hos 6

Note that although this is an individual prayer it was probably still used in the temple or in some other (small group) corporate context—cf. Hannah.

See P. D. Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms*, 6-7, following E. Gerstenberger.

### Individual and Community

There are prayers (and thanksgivings) prayed by people, by leader, and by ordinary individuals:

Prayers for an individual to pray: Psalms 6, 10, 22, 26, 31, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 64, 70, 71, 86, 88, 109, 120, 141, 142

Prayers for a leader to pray: Psalms 3, 5, 7, 13, 17, 25, 28, 35, 61, 63, 69, 102, 140, 143

Prayers for the congregation to pray: Psalms 12, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89, 90, 94, 106, 123, 126, 137, 144

But the mere use of “we” or “I” may not tell us which are individual, royal, or communal, and

some of the listing above is thus a matter of guesswork.

Thanksgiving

King

63

18

People

79

124

Prayer

Individual

38

30

Consider Numbers 20:14-21 (RV/ASV, because it gives you the “thee”s and “thou”s):

And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us…: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border: let us pass, I pray thee, through thy land; we will not pass through field or through vineyard… until we have passed thy border. And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass through me, lest I come out with the sword against thee. And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go up by the high way: and if we drink of thy water, I and my cattle, then will I give the price therof: let me only… pass through on my feet. And he said, Thou shalt not pass through. And Edom came out against him with much people…. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefor Israel turned away from him.

Try reading Psalms each way — e.g., 51; 139; also 91; 118.

## Compassion, Covenant, Redemption/Restoration, Fear/Reverence

### Compassion

Rehem – the womb: 22:10

Rahamim (the plural) – compassion (the feelings of a mother for her child):

25:6; 40:11; 51:1; 69:16; 77:9; 79:8; 103:4; 106:46

Raham (the verb) – 103:13!

### Covenant

Berit

A solemnly sealed committed relationship: 50:5

Keep his covenant (parallelism – decrees): 25:10; cf. 44:17; 50:16; 78:10; 103:18

Yahweh is mindful of his covenant (parallelism – statute): 105:8-10; 106:45; 111:5, 9

Appeal to Yahweh’s covenant commitment: 74:20; 89:3, 28, 34, 39 (most refs in any psalm)

Yahweh makes known his covenant (parallelism – friendship): 25:14

The human equivalent: 55:20

Making a covenant against God!: 83:5

### Redemption/restoration

The verb ga’al, the participle go’el

See Ruth for background

Redeemer/restorer: 19:14; 78:35; 103:4

Redeem/restore: 74:2; 77:15; 107:2

Redeemed: 107:2

### Fear/reverence

The verb and adjective yare’; the noun yir’ah.

Things not to be afraid of:

3:6 (thousands); 23:4 (calamity); 27:1 (anybody); 27:3 (an army); 46:2 (earthquake); 49:5, 16 (times when the wicked flourish); 56:3-4, 11 (human beings); 91:5 (things that threaten); 112:7-8 (bad news)

Who is to revere Yahweh:

33:8; 67:7; 102:15 (all the world); Yahweh’s people – whom this defines (22:25)

Things to cause awe:

40:3 (Yahweh’s acts of grace); 52:6, 64:9 (Yahweh’s act of punishment); 65:8 (Yahweh’s signs); 102:15 (Yahweh’s acts on Israel’s behalf)

Associates of awe:

praise (22:23); hearing from Yahweh (25:12, 14); taking refuge (31:19); hope (33:18); protection and provision (34:7-9); trust (40:3); deliverance (85:9); commitment, compassion, faithfulness (103:11, 13, 17); food (111:5); wisdom (111:10)

# January 27: How to Pray for Other People (The Prayer Psalms [ii])

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

### Preparatory Homework:

Homework 4a: Hebrew study of Psalm 6

Homework 4b: Read Psalm 88 and respond to the first five questions on page 38. Then read Mandolfo, “Psalm 88 and the Holocaust” in *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007) 151-170 (available on Moodle and online from the library or as print copy), and make five comments on page 38

Post homework 4b

Before class, comment on the postings of other people in your group

### Class time:

6.30 Worship 1 Samuel 1—2

“Take my hand”

6.40 Hebrew study

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture How to pray for other people (pages 39-42)

Anger as an expression of faith.

Cf. Brueggemann lecture on tape

Unless you are living in covenant you daren’t get angry

Whose psalm do you think this is?

Words for grace and deliverance in the Psalms (page 43)

### Further reading, if you wish:

Anderson, *Out of the Depths* 63-105.

Capps, *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling* (the chapter on the Psalms)

Culley, R. C. “Psalm 88” in *Ascribe to the Lord* (ed. L. Eslinger and G. Taylor), 289-301.

Jones, Serene. “Soul Anatomy.” In H. W. Attridge and M. E. Fassler (ed.), *Psalms in Community* (on Calvin’s pastoral approach; many other papers on the use of the Psalms in different Jewish and Christian traditions in this volume)

## Dessert after class at 111 South Orange Grove Boulevard

## Hebrew Homework Questions 4a: Psalm 6:2-11

2 What is odd and significant about the word order in each colon?

אל [*’al*]: Why not לא[*lō’*]?

What is the meaning of the ו at the beginning of the second colon?

3 חנני [*ḥonnēnî*]: NRSV has “be gracious,” TNIV “be merciful”: which is more appropriate?

What is the meaning of בהל [*bahal*]?

BHS suggests נבלו “languish” or בלו “are worn out.”

4-5 What do you think is the meaning of the word נפש [*nepeš*] in light of the usage in these two verses?

What is the meaning of שוב here?

What is the meaning of ישע ?

7 אשחה [*’eśḥeh*]: what does this literally mean?

BDB proposes אָשִׂיחָה from שׂיח “complain.”

8 NRSV has “my eyes waste away,” TNIV “my eyes grow weak”: what is the justification for these present tense translations?

BHS proposes צרתי “my distress.”

10 תחנתי [*těḥinnātî*]: in light of the meaning of חנני [*ḥonnēnî*] in v. 3, what does this noun mean?

Note combination of qatal and yiqtol

11 ויבהלו [*wěyibbāhălû*]: what is the significance of the fact that the verb begins with a simple *w*?

## Homework 4b: Questions on Psalm 88

1. What is the structure of the psalm, or its argument?
2. How does this psalm compare with other prayer psalms we have read (e.g., Psalms 22 and 89)?
3. Is it a proper way for a Christian to pray? Why or why not?
4. Would it be proper to encourage someone to pray this way? Why or why not?
5. Any questions you’d like me to deal with in class?

For Sheol, see page 40.

1. Read Mandolfo’s article “Psalm 88 and the Holocaust” and make five separate sentences of concrete comment on key issues raised by it (number them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). These can include (for instance) observations on something you find illuminating, or comments on something you disagree with, or questions about something you find puzzling.

## How to Pray for Other People: Prayer Psalms (ii)

### The prayer psalms as our intercession

A way of using prayers of protest and lament when you don’t need to protest or lament.

A way of entering into the experience of people in need and “interceding.”

### The prayer psalms in pastoral ministry or counseling

1 Samuel 1—2

D. S. Capps—*Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling* on their use in pastoral work.

The Psalms give people the means of expressing the pain they need to express—but to God.

We help them do that—then listen to God for them.

Psalm 88 as an example

“If we are to mirror God... we have to be prepared to enter our individual wounds and through them the wounds of the community... not hide them through casuistry, not seal them up”

(M. Ross, *Pillars of Flame,* xviii-xix).

Hymns affirm the world as it is; “the lament, in contrast to the hymn, legitimates and articulates imagination at the margin.... These poems are voices of marginality”

(W. Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience*, 192, 193).

Also J. B. Metz, *The Courage to Pray*, esp. 5, 7, 11-16, 25-26

### The prayer psalms in the New Testament

Psalm 22 in the life of Jesus (e.g., Mark 15.34)

Psalm 44 on the lips of Paul (Romans 8.36)

### When the community needs to grieve or pray

G. A. Arbuckle—*Grieving for Change* on the application of this to groups.

Cf. the situation presupposed in *The Full Monty* or *Billy Elliot*

An equivalent context for the community at prayer: see 2 Kings 19; 2 Chr 20

## Life and death

OT believers knew that when you died, your body became lifeless and incapable of action or movement. It was put into the family tomb, joining the physical remains of earlier members of your family, and was left there in darkness. They pictured what happened to the non-physical part of you along similar lines. Your “self” or “personality” — “soul” is a rather misleading word—was also lifeless and unable to do anything. It also joined other lifeless personalities in a non-physical equivalent of the grave, Sheol. You were stuck there. Cf. Psalm 88

The poetic books in general, however, also assume that you may not wait till the end of your life to experience “death.” They do not distinguish life and death as sharply as we do. People saw, or felt, experiences such as illness, depression, separation from God, oppression, and loneliness as a loss of fullness of life—it was as if death had got hold of them while the experience lasted. The idea is a bit like John’s understanding of “eternal life” beginning now as fullness of life, while “eternal death” begins now as people fail to experience fullness of life in Christ.

The truth and importance of the Sheol doctrine:

* there are no grounds for resurrection hope before Christ came
* no-one else is Lord of the realm of death
* this life deserves to be taken seriously
* deathly is how it feels
* deathly is how it is when we are cut off from God

The NT takes a similar view to the OT as it implies that after we die our experience is rather like sleep, but on the basis of Christ’s resurrection it can add that we will eventually awake to be raised and judged together at the End (e.g., John 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelations 20:11-15). In the meantime, we are safe and secure with Jesus.

There are two NT passages that are difficult to fit with these other passages:

*The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).* But in general it would be unwise to base a doctrine on the detail of a parable. Further, here Jesus is picking up a well-known folktale (known from Egypt and from Jewish sources). The point Jesus wants to make is that there will be eternal life (contrary to Sadducean belief), and he uses the folktale as a way of making the point that one needs to take that fact into account in the way one lives one’s life. But being in Abraham’s bosom is a similar phrase to the idea of being gathered to join one’s ancestors, and could imply that Sheol is divided into a section for believers who are safe and on their way to resurrection, and a section for unbelievers who are on their way to judgment. That would fit with the idea that we go to be with Christ when we die.

*“Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).* ”Paradise” is a term for the Garden of Eden and then thus for a future earthly paradise and for heaven. But was Jesus really going to heaven on Good Friday? Surely he was on his way to preach in Sheol (1 Peter 4:6)? It is on Easter Day that he is ascending to his Father (John 20:17). Does Jesus mean “I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise”? Or does “today” refer to the time of salvation that now dawns (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7 - 4:10; cf. the “from now on” of Luke 22:69? Today Jesus is opening the gates of Sheol so that people can leave for heaven. Does Jesus mean that the man is “in Christ” and therefore secure, “with Christ” (cf. Philippians 1:23) and in effect in heaven, as we are raised to new life in Christ (e.g., Ephesians 2:5-6) even though not yet raised to bodily resurrection life?

## Using Prayer Psalms in Prayer for Healing

A service drawn up by the Rev. Peta Sherlock for a service in her church in Melbourne in Holy Week.

### Introduction

*Minister*: .............., do you desire prayer for healing? *Answer*: I do.

*Minister*: The Psalms, as the prayer and hymnbook of the people of God, encourage us to speak the truth before God, to present our complaint, whether it involve our own sinfulness, ill health, the presence of enemies, or the absence of God. The Psalms of Lament, especially Psalms 22 and 69, were used by the writers of the Gospels to interpret what happened to Jesus at his crucifixion in his moment of great need, and remind us that Jesus is with us in our suffering.

Many Laments end with a moment of surprise, gift, or miracle, when an answer seems to have been given to the person in need. We pray for you today that you may experience the power of God’s presence to heal and bless you. I ask you now to name your lament in the words of the psalms.

### The Lament

(The person chooses one or more of these verses or another suitable verse from the psalms)

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? (Psalm 13:1-2)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. (Psalm 22:1-2)

Be gracious to me, LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.

For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing;

My strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. (Psalm 31:9-10)

I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.

I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.

(Psalm 69:2-3)

O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you. (Psalm 69:5)

O Lord, all my longing is known to you; my sighing is not hidden from you. (Psalm 38:9)

### Statement of Trust

(People in the congregation choose one or more of the following verses)

It was you, O LORD, who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.

On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. (Psalm 22:9-10)

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;

for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name’s sake lead me and guide me,

take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. (Psalm 31:3-4)

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. (Psalm 42:5)

### Call for help (The person chooses from the following verses)

O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid!

In you, O LORD, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame. (Psalm 31:1)

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD, for I call on you. (Psalm 31:16)

In your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily.

Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. (Psalm 31:1-2)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12)

As for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD.

At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.

With your faithful help, rescue me from sinking in the mire. (Psalm 69:13)

### Prayer for Healing and Declaration of Hope

(The minister chooses one or more of the following verses)

I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me. (Psalm 13:5-6)

I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction;

you have taken heed of my adversities, and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;

you have set my feet in a broad place. (Psalm 31:7-8)

I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.

You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalm 73:23)

Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God. (Psalm 31:5)

### Blessing

## Words for Grace (חן)

Grace, favor – *chen*.

Be gracious – *chanan*

The noun – only 45:2; 84:11

Gen 18:3; 19:19

Trying to earn favor – Gen 32:5; 33:8, 15

A plea on the basis of need – Ps 4:1; 6:2; 25:16; 27:7; 30:10; 31:9; 56:1

A plea on the basis of nothing in me – Ps 41:4; 51:1

A plea appealing to who I am – Ps 26:11

Prayer is prayer for grace – Ps 6:10; 30:8; 142:1 (I sought grace for myself)

A human characteristic – Ps 37:21, 26

## Words for Deliverance/Salvation (ישע)

*yesha/yeshuah*

the verb *yasha*.

44:3, 4, 6, 7 – salvation = getting you out of a mess. 34:6

An extraordinary act of deliverance that you could not have brought about

Cf. 44:5 by means of God’s name (44:8, 20)

54:1 - save me by your name

In OT often = victory – 98:1

Or healing (cf. Gospels) – 6:4

Or rescue – 22:21

If “salvation” = being in a relationship with God that will continue into eternity?

Best not to translate it “salvation” then?

(They believe in salvation as a relationship with God but they don’t call it that)

The God of my salvation = the God who saves me – 25:5; 27:9

The rock of our salvation = the rock that saves us – 95:1

Two other words that are sometimes translated “deliver”

44:26 *padah ­*– ransom, redeeem

106:10b *ga’al* – act as next-of-kin to restore

# February 3: How to Pray Against Oppressors

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

### Preparatory Homework:

Homework 5a: Hebrew study of Psalm 137 (page 45)

Homework 5b: Read Nathanial Samuel Murrell, “Tuning Hebrew Psalms to Reggae Rhythms,” on Moodle or at [www.**crosscurrents**.org/**murrell**.htm](http://www.crosscurrents.org/murrell.htm)

and David Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis,” on Moodle or online at the library or print, Theology Today37 (1980), 27-38

Fill in and page 46 and post it.

Before class, comment on the postings of other people in your group

### Class time:

* 1. Worship 2 Thessalonians 1

“Soon and very soon”

6.40 Hebrew study

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture How to pray against other people (pages 47-49)

Words for remembering/forgetting and the afflicted/poor in the Psalms (page 50)

How to Pray for your Nation (page 51)

### Further reading, if you wish:

See the items quoted on pages 48-49

## Hebrew Homework Questions 5a: Psalm 137

2. What tense is תלינו and why is this a surprising?

1. For תשכח translations have something like “forget its skill”, but what does the line literally say?

8. What is the initial ש on שישלם?

## Homework 5b: Psalm 137

Compare and contrast the attitudes of Morrell and Steinmetz to Psalm 137. In light of reading them, how do you see the significance of the psalm for us?

## How to Pray Against Oppressors: Psalm 137

The most offensive Psalm. Is it a problem? See Isa 13:13-19; Romans 11:9-10; Acts 1:16, 20, referring to Ps 69:22-25.

### What makes someone pray like vv. 7-9?

Not being unaware that Yhwh is a God of love:

a. The OT assumes that Yhwh has a positive purpose for the nations

Gen 1—12; Isa 2:2-4; 19:18-25

b. The OT does not assume you can do what you like to your enemies

Gen 15:16; Exod 23:4-5

c. Most religions believe that God is loving and expect people to love even their enemies

d. Christ and the NT writers agree with the OT on emphasizing that God also has a tough side.

Matt 23:33; 24:50-51; 25:30, 46; 2 Thes 1:5-9

1. To pray “Come, Lord Jesus” is to pray for people’s punishment Rev 22:20; 6:10

Of course we have to submit our prayers to God’s evaluation

### So what makes someone pray like vv. 7-9?

a. A depth of need and a depth of relationship with God

b. An awareness of being confronted by people under God’s judgment

cf. P. Berger, *A Rumour of Angels*, pp. 86, 88.

1. A conviction that God is involved in history
2. A realism and a pain about children

## Theologians on Psalm 137

### Othmar Keel, The Symbolism of the Biblical World, pp. 7-9

In the West we work with concepts either concrete, such as tree and door, or abstract, such as being and kingship. The middle east prefers concepts that are themselves concrete but that signify a reality far larger than their concrete meaning. When a king is portrayed striking down enemies, this may commemorate the historical execution of leaders of particular invading peoples. But it may also portray the defeat of the nation the leaders represent. An execution of the kind portrayed may never have occurred. The picture represents in symbolism the kingship’s power over all enemies.

In the OT “the horn of the wicked” is thus an ideogram for “the power of the wicked.” And in Ps 137 perhaps the little ones to be dashed against the rock should be understood just as symbolically as “Mother Babylon.” “The inhabitants of the oppressor-city or the children of the ruling dynasty concretize the continuation of the unrighteous empire.... In this vein, one might translate: ‘Happy is he who puts an end to your self-renewing domination!’” Such a sentence would presumably offend no one, though it too implies brutal consequences.

### J. Magonet, *Bible Lives*, pp. 20-22

The invitation to sing one of the songs of Zion suggests reference to the psalms that speak of Zion, the spiritual center of Israel’s faith (vv. 1-3). Instead the psalmist recalls Jerusalem, the political as well as spiritual capital of the nation (vv. 4-5). It is as if the psalmist says, I will not sing you a merely religious song, but I will sing you a song of defiance, a promise that I will never forget my homeland, and that there will one day be a reckoning for what you have done. It is not merely an affirmation of love for Jerusalem but a self-curse, a curse on hand and tongue, the greatest curse that a musician could utter (see v. 6).

The closing prayer (v. 7-9) is not the pious prayer of a later time of reconciliation but the ferocious outburst of people in the midst of defeat, powerlessness, and despair. Rarely in the Psalter is anger expressed in such a graphic way. It may have been one of the sustaining forces in the people’s hearts during the seventy years of exile.

### C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, pp. 113-115

“We know the proper object of utter hostility—wickedness, especially our own,” my own heart being the specimen of that wickedness best known to me. “From this point of view, I can use even the horrible passage in 137 about dashing the Babylonian babies against the stones. I know things in the inner world which are like babies; the infantile beginnings of small indulgences, small resentments, which may one day become dipsomania [alcoholism] or settled hatred.... Against all such pretty infants... the advice of the Psalm is best. Knock the little bastards’ brains out.”

### Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, pp. 74-77

Psalm 137 may at first offend us because of its vengefulness, but after that it offends us because of the “nonnegotiable, scandalous particularity of Jerusalem.” It requires us to become in some sense Zionists (though not necessarily supporting Israeli militarism, for “the Psalter is a set of Jerusalem songs... convinced that our human future is somehow linked to that concrete place”—which cannot be spiritualized.

It is not a psalm that reflects a calamity that has just happened but one that represents the voice of people who have learned with anguish that things would not immediately be put right. “This is a psalm for the long haul, for those not able to see the change.” Its hope “must necessarily be visceral,” perhaps “an embarrassment to bourgeois folk who have never lost that much, been abused that much, or hoped that much.”

“It is not for us to ‘justify’ such a prayer in the Bible.” But “it is there for good reason. It reminds us that the stark claims of the holy God override all our conventional humanness. It poses the question whether forgiveness can be “a mode of coming to terms too easily” and whether “genuine forgiveness is possible only when there has been a genuine articulation of hatred.” Given that Israel takes no action, “the capacity to leave vengeance to God may free Israel for its primary vocation, which is the tenacious hope that prevents sell-out. Indeed... if Israel could not leave vengeance boldly to God... Israel might have had no energy or freedom to hope.” Psalm 137 is thus less a childish outburst than “the voice of seasoned religion.”

“It is an act of profound faith to entrust one’s most precious hatreds to God, knowing they will be taken seriously.”

### Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Psalms: Prayer Book of the Bible, pp. 21-23

The Psalms entrust vengeance to God rather than taking it in their own hands (cf. Rom 12:19). The prayer for the vengeance of God is the prayer that God’s justice will be carried out in the judgment of sin. But “as a sinner I too am under this judgement.” And God’s judgment has been fulfilled, in a mysterious way. “God’s vengeance fell not on the sinners, but on the only sinless One... who took the sinners’ place.” It was because he was doing this that he could pray “Father forgive them.” None but he who himself suffered the wrath of God could utter such a prayer. That was the end of all illusions about a love of God who does not take sin so very seriously. God hates and condemns his enemies in the only just One and he is the one who can therefore pray for their forgiveness.

So when as a Christian I pray for God’s vengeance, I know how God has already answered that prayer in the affirmative. “Even today it is only through the Cross of Christ, through the satisfaction of God’s vengeance, that I can believe in God’s love and forgive enemies.” But whoever oppose Christ, on them must God’s vengeance fall. They must bear God’s curse for themselves. And the NT speaks of the church’s joy on the day when they do: see Gal 1:8-9; 1 Cor 16:22; Rev 18; 19; 20:11.

### David Tuesday Adamo, “The Imprecatory Psalms in African Context”

(From *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches* [Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2001])

Prayer for God’s punishment of one’s enemies is a prominent feature of the psalm, and one that troubles Western Christians. It does not so trouble African indigenous churches. Rather than psalms of violence and hate, they are psalms of protection and defense. People are aware that enemies will use spiritual means (e.g. curses) to cause harm to them, and traditional religion gives people charms and recitations to counteract these. When people came to believe in Christ, these means of protection became forbidden, but they discovered the imprecatory psalms and came to use them in this way.

See also John L. Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

“Lord, fill me with the hatred of heretics” (Abraham Calovius, 17th-century Lutheran theologian)

## Remembering and Forgetting in the Psalms

Keeping in mind:

Remembering God and God’s acts and therefore hoping (63:6)

Not remembering God’s acts and therefore not hoping (78:42; 106:7)

Remembering God’s decisions and therefore hoping (119:52)

Remembering the old days and therefore praying (143:5)

Remembering how things were and therefore praying (137:1, 6)

Being mindful and therefore acting:

Remembering the cry of the afflicted and not forgetting it (9:12)

Not remembering people in Sheol (88:5)

Remembering his covenant/word (105:8, 42)

Remembering people’s wrongs (137:7)

Exhortation about remembering:

Remember your mercy not my sin (25:6-7)

Remember who we are, how the enemy acts, how the impious act (74:2, 18, 22)

Remember how short is my time, remember my enemies’ reproach (89:47, 50)

Don’t forget us/them (74:19, 23)

## The Afflicted, Needy, and Poor

‘*anaw* – afflicted, oppressed, distressed, helpless, humbled (not humble/meek?)

22:26

25:9

76:9

‘*ani* – ditto

22:24

72:2, 4, 12

88:15

*dal* – weak, low (in resources)

41:1

72:13

82:3, 4

’*ebyon –* wanting, needy

12:5

72:4, 12, 13

82:4

Note antitheses:

Poor and powerless over against rich and powerful

Wanting in relation to what people need in order to live

Afflicted, distressed, over against oppressors/happy

## How to Pray for Your Nation

In his book *Where Your Treasure Is: Psalms that Summon You from Self to Community* (Eerdmans 1993), Eugene Peterson studies “eleven psalms that shaped the politics of Israel and can shape the politics of America”:

2 the unselfing of America

87 unself-made

110 unself-centered

93 unself-government

46 unself-help

62 unself-assertion

77 unself-pity

14 unself-righteous

82 unself-serving

114 unself-sufficient

45 unself-love

He comments, “writing about prayer is not prayer; neither is reading about it. Prayer is, well—prayer.” He then suggests a way of going about it. Throughout, of course, we may substitute our own nation.

1 Gather a few friends and commit yourselves to meet together for the “unselfing of America.”

2 When you meet, pray the Psalm; discuss its application to your nation; pray it again; spend time in silence letting it soak in; and pray it a third time.

3 Look for God to draw you into action.

Some quotes from the book:

Prayer is political action. That we have not collapsed into anarchy is due more to prayer than to the police. The single most widespread misunderstanding of prayer is that it is private.

The best school for prayer continues to be the Psalms. It also turns out to be an immersion in politics.

Prayer was [the Psalmists’] characteristic society-shaping and soul-nurturing act.

Two psalms are carefully set as an introduction [to the Psalter]. Psalm 1 is a laser concentration on the person; Psalm 2 is a wide-angle lens on politics. We love Psalm 1 and ignore Psalm 2.

We often imagine that the psalms are private compositions. All of them are corporate; all were prayed by and in the community. We are made citizens of a kingdom, that is, a society. [God] teaches us the language of the kingdom by providing us with the psalms, which turn out to be as concerned with rough-and-tumble politics as they are with quiet waters of piety.

# February 10: How to Give Your Testimony (Psalms of Thanksgiving)

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

## Preparatory homework required:

Homework 6a: Hebrew study of Psalm 30:2-13 (in English Bibles 1-12) (page 53)

Homework 6b: Read page 54, write a prayer psalm on page 54

Homework 6c: Read “The Costly Loss of Praise” by Rolf Jacobson, *Theology Today* 57 (2000): 375-85 (available in eReserves and online or as print copy in the library). Fill in page 55

Post homeworks 6b and 6c.

Before class, comment on the postings of other people in your group.

You can also look through pages 58-59 on Studying a Text and Writing an Exegetical Paper to see if you have any questions

## Class time:

6.30 Worship Psalm 32

“I will give thanks to thee.”

6.40 Hebrew study

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture How to give your testimony: Thanksgiving Psalms (page 56)

Words for teaching/law (torah), knowledge/acknowledgment, waiting/hoping, and blessing in the Psalms (page 57)

Writing Your Exegetical Paper (pages 58-59)

## Further reading, if you wish:

C. Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* 5-7, 15-35, 81-90, 102-16

## Hebrew Homework Questions 6a: Psalm 30:2-13

2 דליתני [*dillîtānî*]: translations have “you lifted me out.” What is the basis for this? What other verb might it be connected with?

4 What do you think is the meaning of the word נפש [*nepeš*] in light of the usage in Psalm 6?

In verse 4b, K has מיורדי [*mywrdy*[, implying מִיּוֺרְדֵי [*miyyôrědê*]: what does the colon then mean?

Q has מִיָּרְדִי [*miyyordî*]: what does the colon then mean?

5 זמרו [*zamměrû*]: What is questionable about the translation “sing”?

קדשו [*qodšô*]: translations have “his holy [name].” What is a word for word translation, but why are the translations right?

רנה [*rinnâ*]: translations have “rejoicing” or “joy.” What is questionable about that?

ואני [*wa’ănî*]: why is this word here?

בל [*bal*]: what is the significance of this negative?

8 What is a literal translation of the first half of the verse?

If NRSV and TNIV are right in their translation of the last two words, what is odd about those two words?

9 אדני [*’ădōnāy*]: the noun means “lord,” but what is the ending?

אתחנן [*’etḥannān*]: translations have “have mercy,” but is this right?

13 כבוד [*kābôd*]: translations have “my soul” or “my heart.” How do they get that meaning for the noun, and where does the “my” come from?

ידם [*yiddôm*]: NRSV has “be silent,” JPSV “stop”: what verbs do they connect the word with?

## Homework 6b: Your Prayer Psalm

Anyone Can Write a Prayer Psalm

Decide who are the people in need that you are praying for

—your church, or your city, or your people, or some other person in need, or yourself

Put yourself in the position of the person or people you are praying for—pray *as* them

Remind yourself and God of key facts about who God is or things God has done in the past

—perhaps ones relevant to the prayer

Tell God straight about the need

—about the facts

—about the feelings

—about the fears

Tell God you still trust—or tell him you can no longer trust

Tell God what you want, in one line

Listen for God’s answer, and/or imagine you have heard God’s answer

Respond to the answer

For any kind of Psalm, remember:

You don’t have to include all the above aspects or keep to that order. This is a point of departure. Decide what needs to be said in the light of these possibilities. But don’t just say what your instincts tell you—we are seeking to learn to pray in a scriptural way

Express yourself in images

Reflect your own experiences but do so indirectly, so other people can identify with them

Say things more than once, in different words

Go in for some theological translation where you need to: e.g.,

* When the psalms refer to the temple, we might think of the presence of God as once again among people, not in a building—but we might also think of our church building
* When the psalms refer to a leader, we might think of responsibility for the people of God once again belonging to everyone.
* When the psalms refer to Jerusalem, we might think of our own city (but also the actual Jerusalem).
* When the psalms refer to Jacob-Israel, we might think of the church (but also the Jewish people, and the State of Israel
* When the psalms refer to priests, we might think of pastors

## Homework 6c: “The Costly Loss of Praise”

1. What did this title suggest to you when you saw it?
2. What does Jacobson mean by it? What is the loss of praise and how is it costly? Are you convinced? Why/why not?
3. Putting your answers to 1 and 2 together, what (if anything) could/should we/you/somebody do with regard to your church?

## How to Give Your Testimony: Psalms of Thanksgiving

Psalms of thanksgiving/testimony (“I” or “we”): 9, 18, 30, 32, 34, 73, 92, 103, 107, 116, 118, 124, 136, 138

The special stress of Claus Westermann—*The Praise of God in the Psalms* (1965); enlarged ed., *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (1981); more intelligible, *The Living Psalms* (1989). He calls it “declarative praise”—praise that declares what God has done for you.

Such praise begins in life and is personal but it must become public (testimony).

Psalm 116 as an example:

Invitation/commitment to praise

Recollection: experience of affliction, prayer

God’s response

Invitation/commitment to praise

Transition to praise

*Todah* — thanksgiving/testimony/confession.

“*You* have done this” more than *“We* are so grateful”—God even has the glory in the grammar

Psalm 118

## Anyone Can Give Their testimony

Decide who are the people you are testifying for (see above)

Tell us what you are going to do and/or invite us to join you

Tell the story of how things were

—when you were doing fine

—how things collapsed

—how you prayed

—the way God answered

—the difference God’s answer made

Express how you now feel

Say what will be your attitude to God in the future

Tell other people what difference this should make to them

Talk more about God than about you

For any kind of Psalm, remember

Express yourself in images

Reflect your own experiences but do so indirectly, so other people can identify with them

Say things more than once, in different words

You don’t *have* to include all these aspects or to keep to this order. This is a point of departure. Decide what you need/want to say in the light of these possibilities.

But don’t just say what your instincts tell you—we are seeking to learn to pray in a scriptural way

Go in for some theological translation where you need to in connection with the king, Jerusalem, the temple, Israel, etc, along the lines suggested in connection with prayer psalms

## Teaching/Torah

1:2

19:7

37:31

40:8

78:1, 5, 10

89:30

94:12

105:45

119:1, 18, 29, 70, 72, 92, 97…

## Knowledge/Acknowledgment

1:6

4:3

32:5

46:10

51:3, 6

79:6

91:14

95:10

## Waiting and Hoping

Not “wait on” and not “hope against hope” but waiting for and being expectant

*yahal*

42:5, 11

43:5

119:43, 74, 81

130:5, 7

*qawah*

25:3, 5, 21

37:9

## Blessing

“The blessedness/happiness/good fortune of…” (*ashre*)

1:1

2:11

“Blessed be/is…” (*barak*)

72:18-19

115:15

## Studying a Text

These notes incorporate some ideas about manuscript Bible Study from IVCF. workers Shannon Lamb and Una Lucey. Although I express them linearly, in practice, you will keep going backward and forward. This list is merely logical.

* 1. Begin by praying that God will open your eyes to the scriptures and meet you during this time.
  2. Then ask some of the questions that follow.
  3. What is the thrust of the passage? Can you express in a sentence its theme and aim? For instance, one might say that Psalm 147’s aim is to encourage people to worship God with enthusiasm, because of who God is and because of what creation is.
  4. What is the structure of the passage – i.e. what are the elements that contribute to the thrust you have described? What are the different points the passge makes, and how do they contribute to the whole? The structure might be linear (see Psalm 107) or it might be like the petals of a flower (see Psalm 119) or it might be a spiral (see Psalms 42-43).

Note that the aim is analysis not merely summary of the content – you’re trying to get inside its thinking. To avoid being impressionistic and missing the text’s own point, look for objective marks of structure such as

* changes in forms of speech (past verbs, present verbs, imperatives),
* uses of link words such as “for”, “therefore”, “then”, but, so that
* changes in the subjects of verbs (I/we, you, they)
* changes in the subject matter

If you can’t see a structure (I can’t see one in Psalm 72), what is the structure of the *thinking* in the passage? What is its underlying theology, and how do the elements of *that* relate to each other?

* 1. Give a title to each of the sections you have discerned. Mark all the repeated words, logical connectors, and laws of composition. Note the repeated words from other passages. Note any new elements in the passage. A new emotion or theme is an important piece of the puzzle. Write down your questions in the margins
  2. What are the passage’s emphases? Look for words that recur (e.g. “good” in Gen 1), or different expressions for approximately the same idea (e.g., “worship,” “praise,” exult”), or opposites (e.g. “remember” and “forget”).
  3. Look for the way it makes its points. For instance, does it
* use comparisons (an image will often express something concretely and vividly)?
* or spell out its generalizations in particulars? – e.g., Ps 23 moves from “The Lord is my shepherd” to how that works out (pasture, water), which helps you see the point of the image
* or move from particulars to generalizations
* or move from stating an idea or relating an event to explaining its meaning?
* or move from cause to effect or from effect to cause or from an act to its aim?
* or ask rhetorical questions?
  1. What do we learn from the place of the passage in the book where it appears? What does this context tell us?
  2. Do we know anything about the historical, cultural, or social context to which it was addressed? Are there any matters it mentions that you need to look up in a reference work?
  3. What questions does the passage raise for you? Try to make them questions that help you get inside the passage some more – “friendly” questions you would like to ask the author of the passage. Be concrete and specific. Think through two or three possible answers for each of your questions and look in the passage for evidence for each option.
  4. Does the passage say anything that contrasts with
* something a pastor said in a sermon once
* your sense that “God wouldn’t do/say that.”
* things you are comfortable saying to God
* what you have always reckoned must be theologically true.

If so, do think the question through again, but none of those are evidence for what scripture actually says, here or elsewhere.

* 1. What implications does the passage have for (e.g.) worship/mission/spirituality/the nature of the gospel/ what we believe/ethics/pastoral care/seminary life/what you do for the rest of your week? In other words, look at the passage in the light of other subjects you are studying, other issues that interest you, Christian service or secular work you do. Remember that a clue to seeing how scripture applies in fresh ways is to think about application to the church or community not just to the individual.
  2. Look up the passage in a commentary or two, and perhaps in some other work available to you which might help you with regard to the passage’s meaning and its significance for us, including word dictionaries.
  3. Ask if there is anything you have learned which makes the Bible worth reading – anything that confronted you rather than simply confirmed what you already thought. If not, start again?

## Writing Your Exegetical Paper

\*Provide the same sort of word-for-word translation and also “smooth” translation as you do for class.

\*In addition, comment on any places where the Hebrew is more subtle than you would think from the standard English translations

\*Comment on any places where there is some significance in the Hebrew word-order compared with the English translations, which enables you to see more of what the passage means

\*Comment on any theologically important or rich words. Look them up in reference books such as the *Theological Lexicon of the OT*, the *New International Dictionary of OT Theology and Exegesis*, and the *Theological Dictionary of the OT*

\*Comment on any places where the Hebrew words look or sound similar to each other and make links that you would not see from the English

\*Note places where the Hebrew is more difficult or obscure than you would realize from the English and comment on the difficulty.

\*Compare NRSV and/or TNIV and/or CEB and one other translation (two translations altogether) and comment on any places where they vary in significant ways from each other. See how this is related to the Hebrew. Does it mean the words don’t really have English equivalents or that the Hebrew is ambiguous or that it is difficult to provide an idiomatic English translation or that some translations are adding things or omitting things or that there is a textual uncertainty?

\*Look at what some of the recommended commentaries have to say on the psalm.

\*Study the passage as a whole as described on the pages on “Studying a Text”

\*Get the “big picture” of the passage—beware of it just being a collection of details. Work at the whole and the parts.

# February 17: How to Keep Hoping (Psalms of Trust)

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

## Preparatory homework required:

Homework 7a Hebrew study of Psalm 42:2-12 [English 1-11] (page 61)

Homework 7b: Read Dan Allender and Tremper Longman, “The Hidden Hope in Lament” on Moodle or at [www.leaderu.com/marshill/mhr01/lament1.html](http://www.leaderu.com/marshill/mhr01/lament1.html), fill in page 62, and post it.

Homework 7c: Read Psalms 16 and 27; fill in page 63 and post it.

Before class, comment on the postings of other people in your group

## Class time:

6.30 Worship “As the Deer”

6.40 Hebrew study: Psalm 42

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture How to keep hoping (page 64)

The interrelationship of praise and prayer (page 65)

How the prayer-testimony process can get short-circuited (page 66)

Words for Aspects of our Human Nature in the Psalms (page 67)

## Further reading, if you wish:

Read Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria. *Letter to Marcellinus Concerning the Psalms*. http://[www.kensmen.com/catholic/psalmsathanasiusletter.html](http://www.kensmen.com/catholic/psalmsathanasiusletter.html) (on Moodle)

Brueggemann, “The Psalms and the Life of Faith” (in eReserves)

## Hebrew Homework Questions 7a: Psalm 42:2-12

Collect the occurrences of the following and comment on the different meanings

ל [*l*]

על [‘*al*]

נפש [*nepeš*]

The imperfect verbs

2 BHS says read כְאַיֶּלת [*kě’ayyelet*] instead of כאיל [*kě’ayyāl*], claiming haplography – that is, there is a ת on the end of the noun and the beginning of the verb and one ת got lost. How would BHS’s emendation improve the grammar?

אלהים [*’ělōhîm*]: BHS notes that two mss and Syriac and Targum have יהוה [*yhwh*]. Note that this psalm is the first in the Elohistic Psalter (Psalms 42 – 83)

3 וְאֵרָאֶה [*wě’ērā’eh*]: what does this mean? In light of that, what does the line literally mean?

BHS notes that a few manuscripts, Syriac, and Targum have וְאֶרְאֶה [*wě’er’eh*]. Wjat does this mean, and how does this make the line easier?

4 באמר [*bě’ěmōr*]: BHS notes that some mss and the Syriac have בְאָמְרָם [*bě’omrām*] as in v. 11. What is the difference in meaning between the two?

5 What is the significance of the –*ah* ending on the two verbs in verse 5aα?

Note the different possible meanings for the imperfect in v. 5a**β**.

סָך [*sāk*] is difficult. See BDB, p. 697. BHS emends to סֹך. See BDB, p. 697.

אֶדַּדֵּם [*’eddaddēm*] is difficult as the pointing at the beginning is hitpael but a hitpael is intransitive and thus can’t have a suffix. See BDB, p. 186. Some mss have אַדִּרִם [*’addirim*]: how would you parse that?

BHS says readאַדִּיר [*’addîr*]: how would you then translate the line?

6 פָנָיו יְשׁוּעוׁת [*yěšû‘ôt pānāyw*]: what does this literally mean?

9 Time reference of the imperfect?

חיי לאל [*lě’ēl ḥayyāy*]: what is the literal meaning? What is the difference from v. 3a?

12 פָנַי יְשׁוּעוׁת [*yěšû‘ôt pānay*]: how is this different from v. 6?

## Homework 7b: “The Hidden Hope in Lament”

Write five separate sentences of concrete comment on key issues raised by the article (number them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). These can include (for instance) observations on something you find illuminating, or comments on something you disagree with, or questions about something you find puzzling.

## Homework 7c: Psalms 16 and 27

1. If these are psalms of trust, what do they suggest is the nature of a psalm of trust? In other words, what do they have in common?
2. What is distinctive about each of the psalms?
3. Is there anything about them you would like clarified?
4. is complicated. It comes in the form השׂתחוה and I follow BDB in thinking it comes from *shachach*, which means "bow down." For the hitpolel BDB gives "be cast down" and then "be despairing" as an extended meaning. "Be depressed" would keep nearer the root image.  
     
   (2) HALOT thinks it comes from *shiach* which means "melt away." For the hitpal HALOT gives "be dissolved" but BDB gives "sink down" (and also thus "be depressed") as well as "melt away."  
     
   It looks to me as if there are two roots *shiach*, one of which means "melt away" and the other "bow down, sink down." The second would be a by-form of *shachach*. It sometimes happens that verbs that have only two consonants get turned into a three-consonant root in more than one way, and this will then be an example.  
     
   It's then a toss-up whether you derive *tishtochach*i from *shiach* or *shachach*. But I'd say that "be cast down, depressed" makes for a more natural meaning in the psalm than "melt away."

## How to Keep Hoping

A large number of the psalms usually classified as laments put the emphasis more on expressing an attitude of hope, trust, and commitment, so I treat these separately from the other prayer psalms.

See Psalms 4, 11, 14, 16, 23, 27, 36, 41, 46, 52, 62, 67, 75, 76, 77, 84, 101, 108, 115, 119, 121, 125, 129, 131, 132, 139.

### The content of trust

Yahweh is watching: Ps 11; 14

Yahweh keeps me safe: Ps 23; 27

Yahweh puts the wicked down: Ps 62; 75

### The bases for trust

Not all of these will work all the time, I guess.

When one is under pressure, we turn our minds to another

### (a) The basis for trust in my own experience

Yahweh speaking to me on my own: Ps 16

Yahweh’s presence in the temple: Ps 36; 84

Yahweh keeping me safe in the past: Ps 41; 129

Yahweh’s material provision: Ps 67

My commitment to Yahweh: Ps 101; 119

My standing against wrongdoing: Ps 139

### (b) The basis for trust outside my own experience

Yahweh’s power and love: Ps 62; 115

Yahweh’s creation of the world and sovereignty in it: Ps 93; 121

Yahweh’s deliverance of the people at the Red Sea: Ps 77

Yahweh’s commitment to Jerusalem: Ps 46; 76; 132

Yahweh’s commitment to David: Ps 132

Yahweh’s specific promises: Ps 108; 119

## The Inter-Relationship of Praise and Prayer

Mowinckel: the essence of Israelite psalmody is the hymn of praise.

Contrast Westermann (154): “There is no petition that did not move at least one step on the road to praise. But there is no praise that is fully separated from the experience of God’s wonderful intervention in time of need.” He contrasts Egyptian Psalms (which only praise God in general terms—not in relation to God’s doing anything) and Babylonian Psalms (which only praise as a lead in to prayer, never for its own sake).

“The praise has power to transform the pain. But conversely the present pain also keeps the act of praise honest” (Brueggemann, *Israel’s Praise*, 139).

But how do praise and prayer interrelate?

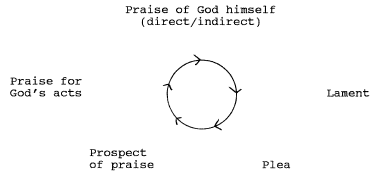
Westermann: the “vital, tension-filled polarity” of plea/praise has its center in declarative praise:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Lament | Declarative Praise  (God has ....)  (thanksgiving) | Descriptive Praise  (God is/does/did...)  (hymn) |

Brueggemann, building on Paul Ricoeur, in “Psalms and the life of faith,” further developed in *Message of the Psalms*:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| orientation  (hymn) | Disorientation  (lament) | Renewed orientation  (thanksgiving) |

Goldingay: a spiral helps to combine these two and do justice to the linear element in our lives with God



See “The Dynamic Cycle of Praise and Prayer,” *Journal for the Study of the OT* 20 (1981), pages 85-90 (available available in eReserves and online or and as print copies in the Library).

All these are in Psalms 22 (prayer) or 30 (thanksgiving); cf. the story in 2 Chronicles 20

Praise feeds prayer; prayer feeds praise

You’re either a lament person or a praise person? Rather rejoicing with rejoicers, weeping with weepers

## How the Prayer-Testimony Process Short-Circuits

How it’s supposed to work:

1. You pray
2. Someone or something brings God’s “Yes” (answer to prayer, stage 1)
3. You express your response of trust
4. God acts (answer to prayer, stage 2)
5. You praise God

Short-circuit (1)—1 Samuel 1 – 2

1. Hannah prays
2. (a) Eli misreads the situation (b) Hannah puts him right (c) Eli brings God’s “Yes”
3. Hannah expresses her response of trust
4. God acts
5. Hannah praises God

Short-circuit (2)—Luke 1

1. Zechariah prays
2. Gabriel brings God’s “Yes”
3. (a) Zechariah doesn’t believe it (b) Gabriel says he won’t be able to talk at all, then
4. God acts
5. Zechariah gets his voice back and praises God

Short-circuit (3)—Luke 17

1. Ten people with skin disease call on Jesus
2. Jesus brings God’s “Yes”
3. They express their response of trust
4. God acts
5. Only one comes back to praise God

Short-circuit (4)—Mark 14—16

1. Jesus prays
2. No-one answers
3. Jesus expresses his response of trust
4. (a) God abandons Jesus (b) God acts
5. Jesus praises God (Heb 2:12, from the anticipatory testimony at the end of Ps 22)

Short-circuit (5)—Genesis 11—21

1. Sarai doesn’t pray for a baby, as far as we are told
2. God says “Yes” anyway
3. Sarai sometimes tries to fix things herself, sometimes laughs in disbelief
4. God acts
5. Sarah praises God for giving her a different laugh

Short-circuit (6)—Mark 7

1. The Canaanite woman calls on Jesus
2. (a) He says “No” (b) She won’t accept “No” for an answer (c) He says “Yes”
3. She expresses her response of trust
4. God acts
5. [Missing, but maybe implicit in the story being here?]

## Words for Aspects of our Human Nature

*nephesh* (traditionally “soul,” more “self” or “life”

35:3

35:4

35:7

35:9

35:12

35:13

35:17

*ruach* (wind, breath, spirit)

104:3

104:4

104:29

104:30

18:15

31:5

32:2

51:10

51:11

51:12

*leb* and *lebab* (heart, mind, inner person)

4:7

7:10

10:6, 11, 13

33:11

*basar* (flesh)

38:3

50:13

56:4

63:1

65:2

‘*olam* (age)

5:11

10:16

72:17

72:19

104:5

104:31

# February 24: How to Say You’re Sorry (Psalms of Confession)

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

## Preparatory homework required:

Homework 8a Hebrew study of Psalm 51:12-21 (in English Bibles, 10-19) (page 69)

Homework 8b: In light of page 44 write a psalm of thanksgiving/testimony on page 70

Homework 8c: Read the Babylonian prayers for forgiveness (page 72), fill in page 71

Post homeworks 8b and 8c.

Before class, comment on the postings of other people in your group

## Class time:

6.30 Worship Psalm 51

“Create in me.”

6.40 Hebrew study

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture How to say you’re sorry: Sin and forgiveness in the Psalms (pages 73-74)

Lamentations as modeling how to say you’re sorry

## Further reading, if you wish:

Read Lamentations as examples of prayers of confession

## Hebrew Homework Questions 8a: Psalm 51:12-21

12 נכון [*nākôn*]: how is this grammatically surprising?

In vv. 12-14, does רוח mean the same thing each time?

16 דמים [*dāmîm*]: what does this mean?

17 תפתח [*tiptāḥ*]: translations have an imperative for this word, but what would be more precise?

18 לא [*lō’*]: BHS notes that LXX has “if” which implies לֻא. How would you then translate the line?

NRSV has “You have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

TNIV has “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

The major difference is where they have the semi-colon indicating the mid-point of the line. Which of them is in agreement with MT’s accents?

19 אלהים זבחי [*zibḥê ’ělōhîm*]: does this make sense?

LXX has “sacrifices *to* God” (objective genitive, like expressions such as “the oath *to* Yahweh” or the violence *to* your brother; cf. GK 128h).

Note that BHS says “read זִבְחִי” – what would that mean?

20 יעלו [*ya‘αlû*]: translations have “will be offered.” What is it more literally? There are actually two possibilities (two ways to parse the word).

## Homework 8b: Your Thanksgiving Psalm

## Homework 8c: How Babylonians and Israelites Prayed for Forgiveness

1. How do you pray for forgiveness? Does praying for forgiveness feature in your church’s worship, and if so, how?
2. Read Psalm 38. What strikes you most about this prayer for forgiveness? Is there anything to learn from it?
3. Read the Babylonian prayers. What strikes you about them? Is there anything to learn from them?
4. Does this study raise any questions?

## How the Babylonians Prayed for Forgiveness

### Marduk 18: A Hand-Raising Prayer

19 Marduk, Great Lord, Compassionate God,

20 Who takes the hand of the fallen,

21 [Who frees] the fettered, Who enlivens the dead.

22 [Because] of my misdeed, known or unknown,

23 [I have been neglectful], have trespassed, slighted, and sinned;

24 [As against] my father, my begetter, against your great divinity,

25 [I have been neglectful], have trespassed, slighted, and sinned.

26 [I have brought] myself before your great divinity;

27 may [the waters of tran]quility meet you.

28 May your angry heart be quieted.

29 May your sweet benevolence, your great

30 forgiveness, your venerable

31 pardon exist for me, so that…

32 The glory of your great divinity let me glo[rify!]

Subscription: A “hand-raising prayer” to Marduk. With either a ritual

arrangement or with a censer.

### Marduk 28: A Pardon-Pleading Prayer

1 Marduk, Compassionate One, Who enlivens the dead,

2 [Who frees] the fettered, Who takes the hands of the fallen,

3 [Who receives] petitions and prayers are you!

4 [Against whom] I have trespassed, slighted, sinned.

5 [With a] “pardon-pleading prayer” I enter to undo my iniquity;

6 [after] your great divinity I walk.

7 My sins, my misdeeds, my offenses

8 which against my lord, I, in this manner, I do.

9 Like an onion may it be peeled here,

10 like a date may it be torn here,

11 like a palm-cord may it be relaxed here.

12 May your sweet forgiveness, your great benevolence,

13 your venerable pardon,

14 for your servant, for me, exist for me, so that

15 I may live and may be healthy, so that…

16 I may praise your divinity!

Subscription: A “pardon-pleading prayer” to Marduk.

Prayers by courtesy of Professor Joel Hunt.

## How to Say You’re Sorry: Psalms of Confession

The (so-called) Penitential Psalms are Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143: but are they?

## Psalm 51: The Heading

There are a number of psalms with headings that make a link with a specific incident in the life of David, Psalms 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142. When you compare the heading and the psalm (e.g., 51), you can see both

* points of contact that fit with the link, and also
* points of contrast that make it seem odd.

The puzzling question is what might explain both features.

If the headings in general relate to Israel’s worship, it is likely that the same would be true of these headings. B. S. Childs (“Psalm titles and midrashic exegesis”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* Vol 16 [1971] 137-50) suggests that they are Bible Study notes or lectionary notes not authorship notes. They do not tell us about who wrote the psalm and when. They invite us to read this psalm and this bit of David’s story alongside each other, to see

* one kind of situation when this prayer might be prayed, or
* one kind of prayer that might be prayed in this situation.

This helps to bring psalm and story alive for the congregation. The same thing happens when people try to link many other “David psalms” with specific incidents in David’s life. It may (or may not) be a helpful exercise in imagination, though it is not a piece of historical study. There is no external evidence that this is right, but it does account for both features of the headings—both the way they fit, and the fact that the fit is incomplete. They do not tell us that David wrote the psalm then. They indicate that it will be helpful to look at the psalm and the story alongside each other.

## Sin and Forgiveness in the Psalms

Rebelling (*pasha*, NRSV transgress)

51:1, 3, 13

32:1, 5; 103:12

(Also not listening = disobeying 81:11, 13; 106:25)

Leads to God paying us a visit (*paqad*) 59:5; 89:32

Restoration then involves pardon 130:4

Not keeping things 130:3

Compassion 51:1

Speaking graciously 51:8

Being unfaithful (*bagad*)

25:3; 78:57; 119:158

(Also *ma*‘*al* – trespassing on someone’s rights or property or honor. E.g., Josh 7:1)

Restoration then involves carrying (“forgive” in English translations) 32:1, 5

Grace 51:1; 130:2

Commitment 51:1

Hiding the face 51:9

Not throwing out 51:11

Getting dirty (*tame*) 106:39

Restoration involves cleansing 51:2, 7

Going off the road (‘*awon*,NRSV iniquity)

51:2, 5, 9; 130:3, 8

25:11; 32:2, 5; 103:3, 10

Restoration involves turning us back

51:13

Redemption – getting us out of the mess that follows? 130:8

Transgressing rules (‘*abar*) 17:3

Not keeping them 78:10, 56

Leads to a negative judgment 51:4

Restoration involves canceling the record

51:1, 9; 130:3; 32:1, 2

Failing (*hata*)

51:2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 13

32:1, 5; 103:10; 119:11

Restoration involves de-failing 51:7

Creating a clean mind and steadfast spirit 51:10

# March 3: Psalms as God’s Word to Us

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

### Preparatory homework required

Homework 9a: Hebrew study of Psalm 72:1-10 (page 76)

Homework 9b: In light of page 77 on the Psalms in the NT fill in pages 78-79, including comments on Old, “The Psalms of Praise in the Worship of the New Testament Church,” *Interpretation* 56 (2002), 20-33.

Post homework 9b.

Before class, comment on the postings of other people in your group

### Class time:

6.30 Worship Romans 15:1-13

“Amazing Grace”

6.40 Hebrew study

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture The Psalms addressed to people (page 80)

How to pray for the government: Psalm 72 (also page81)

Words for justice/faithfulness and judgment/decision-making in the Psalms (*mishpat* and *sedaqah*/*sedeq*) (page 82)

How does the Lord’s Prayer compare with the Psalms? (page 83)

### Further reading, if you wish:

Read Anderson, *Out of the Depths* 203-33; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* 154-62, 168-75

## Hebrew Homework Questions 9a: Psalm 72:1-10

1 לשלמה [*lišělōmōh*]: list four or five possible understandings of this word

Meaning of משפט? Note plural.

Meaning of צדקה?

2 ידין: could be yiqtol or jussive. So through vv. 2-15.

Meaning of דין?

Is צדק different from צדקה?

Meaning of עני?

3 Meaning of שלום?

4 Meaning of שפט?

Meaning of ישע?

4 Meaning of עשק?

5 ייראך [*yîrā’ûk*]: “May [people] be in awe of you.”

NRSV “may he live” follows LXX, which suggests וֽיַאֲרִיךְ. Parse that word. Why would one prefer it to MT?

6b What is the literal meaning of this colon?

זרזיף [*zarzîp*]: BHS suggests יַרְזִיפוּ [*yarzîpû*]. Parse that word and give a translation of the colon when read thus.

BDB page 284 will help you a bit.

7 צדיק “the righteous/faithful.” LXX implies צדק “right/faithfulness.”

8 What is the significance of the ו?

9 ציים: elsewhere these are desert creatures. BDB emends to םצרים “enemies.”

10 Meaning of ישיבו?

## Homework 9b: The Psalms in the NT

There is room for disagreement about what counts as an allusion to the OT. My list of passages comes from the margin of my RSV. If the verbal link is not obvious, this may be because the NT is quoting from the Septuagint

1. Help in understanding Jesus: 2:1-2 (e.g., Matt 3:17; Acts 4:25-26); 8:4-6 (e.g., Heb 2:6-8); 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-31; 13:35); 22 (Matt 27:35, 39, 43, 46; Heb 2:12); 41:5 (Luke 23:46); 35:19 (John 15:25); 40:6-8 (Heb 10:5-9); 41:9 (John 13:18); 45:6-7 (Heb 1:8-9); 69:9 (John 2:17); 69:21 (Matt 27:34, 48); 78:2 (Matt 13:35); 82:6 (John 10:34); 89:27, 37 (Rev 1:5); 91:11-12 (Matt 4:6!!); 97:7 (Heb 1:6); 102:25-27 (Heb 1:10-12); 104:4 (Heb 1:7); 110 (e.g., Heb 1:3, 13; 5:6, 10); 118:22-26 (e.g., Matt 21:9, 42)
2. Help in understanding the gospel: 5:9 (Rom 3:13); 10:7 (Rom 3:14); 14:1-3 (Rom 3:10-12); 19:4 (Rom 10:18); 32:1-2 (Rom 4:7-8); 36:1 (Rom 3:18); 51:4 (Rom 3:4); 68:18 (Eph 4:8); 69:22-23 (Rom 11:9-10); 69:25 (Acts 1:20); 94:11 (1 Cor 3:20); 103:8 (James 5:11); 103:17 (Luke 1:50); 105:8-9 (Luke 1:72-73); 109:8 (Acts 1:20); 140:3 (Rom 3:13); 143:2 (Rom 3:20)
3. Help in understanding Israel: 89:3-4 (Acts 2:30); 89:20 (Acts 13:22)
4. Help in interpreting experience: 8:2 (Matt 21:16); 78:37 (Acts 8:21)
5. Help in understanding the future: 2:8-9 (e.g., Rev 2:26); 6:8 (Matt 7:23; Luke 13:27); 7:9 (Rev 2:23); 9:8 (Acts 17:31); 23:2 (Rev 7:17); 62:12 (Rev 2:23); 69:24, 28 (e.g., Rev 3:5; 16:1); 90:4 (2 Peter 3:8); 115:13 (Rev 11:18); 135:14 (Heb 10:30)
6. Patterns for mission and ministry: 18:49 (Rom 15:9); 44:22 (Rom 8:36); 91:13 (Luke 10:19); 116:10 (2 Cor 4:13); 117:1 (Rom 15:11); 118:6 (Heb 13:6)
7. Patterns for spirituality: 24:4 (Matt 5:8); 34:8 (1 Peter 2:3); 37:11 (Matt 5:5); 95:7-11 (Heb 3:7-11; 4:3-11); 112:9 (2 Cor 9:9); 141:2 (Rev 5:8; 8:3-4)
8. Patterns for living: 4:4 (Eph 4:26); 24:1 (1 Cor 10:26); 34:12-16 (1 Peter 3:10-12); 48:2 (Matt 5:35); 55:22 (1 Peter 5:7)

Psalm 2: application to Jesus and to Christians

Psalm 69: application to Jesus, Israel, Judas, future judgment (and no embarrassment!)

Collections of passages in Matt 5; Rom 3; Heb 1

There is usually little connection with the psalm’s own meaning. The NT writers are inspired by the Spirit to see new significance in the Psalm as it answers questions they need answers to.

We have already noted Ephesians 5:18-20; 6:18-20: the best way into the Psalms’ own meaning? Corporate praise, thanksgiving, prayer

## The Psalms in the NT

Look at two or three of the passages under the various headings on page 76. For each heading, consider: What do the NT writers learn from the Psalms? Would your OT professor be happy with their use of the text? Does this matter? Why or why not?

1. Help in understanding Jesus
2. Help in understanding the gospel
3. Help in understanding Israel
4. Help in interpreting experience
5. Help in understanding the future
6. Patterns for mission and ministry
7. Patterns for spirituality
8. Patterns for living
9. Have I put the psalm references under the right headings? Do we need some more headings?
10. Write three comments on anything that you found true or interesting or questionable or puzzling in Old’s article on the praise psalms in the NT.
11. Any other questions or comments?

## Psalms Addressed to People

As well as hymns, laments, and thanksgivings, Gunkel had several “minor categories” of psalms such as Wisdom Psalms (e.g., 49) and Prophetic (Royal) Psalms (e.g., 110). These belong to a wider group of psalms that are addressed not to God, like the main categories, but to human beings—leader or people. Indeed, that is where the Psalter begins, with teaching and a blessing (Ps 1), and a promise and a challenge (Ps 2). They include Psalms 1, 2, 14, 15, 20, 21, 24, 37, 45, 49, 50, 53, 72, 81, 82, 91, 110, 112, 127, 128, 133. Most of these issue from the ministry of prophets?

## The King in the Psalms

A psalm such as Psalm 2 or 110 raises the question how we understand its way of talking about the king

The background to such psalms is the importance of the covenant with David and his successors (2 Sam 7): see esp., Psalm 132. For other royal (prophetic) Psalms, see e.g., Psalms 2; 45; 110. But what is the significance of these Psalms after the monarchy is gone?

a) Jer 23:5-6 they apply to a future king

b) Isa 55:3-5 they belong to us all

c) They become laments?

Similar issues are raised by the way the Psalms talk about the temple and about Jerusalem—also of key significance in Psalm 132. What do they mean for us?

* When the psalms refer to the temple, we might think of the presence of God as once again among people, not in a building.
* When the psalms refer to Jerusalem, we might think of the church as a whole, or our own city (but also the actual Jerusalem).

When they talk about Israel we might similarly think about

* The Jewish people
* The church as the renewed Israel
* Our own nations

## Psalm 72: Christian Versions

Key ideas brought together in this psalm:

Mishpat tsedaqah yesha shalom berakah

authority/judgment faithfulness/justice salvation/deliverance peace/well-being blessing

fairness—prosperity—prayer—witness—fame—victory thus linked

What do you think of these christianized versions of Psalm 72?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 Jesus shall reign where’er the sun does his successive journeys run; his kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.  2 For him shall endless prayer be made, and praises throng to crown his head; his name like sweet perfume shall rise with every morning sacrifice.  3 People and realms of every tongue dwell on his love with sweetest song; and infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on his name. | 4 Blessings abound where’er he reigns: the prisoner leaps to lose his chains: the weary rind eternal rest: and all the sons of want are blest.  5 Where he displays his healing power, death and the curse are known no more; in him the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost.  6 Let every creature rise and bring peculiar honors to our King, angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the long amen.  Isaac Watts 1674-1748 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 Hail to the Lord’s anointed, great David’s greater Son; hail, in the time appointed, his reign on earth begun! He comes to break oppression, to let the captive free, to take away transgression, and rule in equity.  2 He comes with succour speedy to those who suffer wrong, to help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong, to give them songs for sighing their darkness turn to light, whose souls condemned and dying were precious in his sight. | 3 He shall come down, like showers upon the fruitful earth, and love, joy, hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth; before him on the mountains shall peace the herald go, and righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow.  4 Kings shall fall down before him, and gold and incense bring; all nations shall adore him, his praise all people sing; to him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend; his kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end. | 5 O’er every foe victorious, he on his throne shall rest, from age to age more glorious, all-blessing and all-blest. The tide of time shall never his covenant remove; his name shall stand for ever, that name to us is Love.  James Montgomery 1771-1854 |

Is God involved in the world now, or only at the End?

Do we have responsibility, or can we leave things to God?

Is God concerned with the political or only with the individual?

Is God concerned with the material or just the spiritual?

## Mishpat and Tsedaqah/Tsedeq (“Justice and Righteousness”) in the Psalms

72:1 (*mishpat* is plural)

72:2 (judge – *din*; righteousness - *tsedeq*)

72:3

72:4 (NRSV “defend the cause of” = *shapat*)

72:7 *tsaddiq*

*shapat* – exercise authority, make decisions

cf. the judges in the Book of Judges

Psalm 10:18; 96:13; 98:9

*mishpat* – Psalm 33:5; 36:6; 37:6, 28, 30

*tsedaqah* – behavior that fits with your commitments (active faithfulness)

cf. Isaiah 45:8b, 23, 24; 46:12, 13; 51:6, 8

Psalm 5:8; 22:31; 31:1; 33:5; 36:6, 10; 40:10; 51:14; 71:2, 15, 16, 19, 24

*tsedeq –* Isaiah 41:10; 42:6; 45:8a

Psalm 4:1, 5; 7:8, 17

## How Does the Lord’s Prayer Compare with the Psalms?

I used to think that Jesus’ prayer was distinctive because it related directly to the context where God’s sovereignty was about to be implemented, and it was a prayer for people who are involved in proclaiming that.

The opening invocation of God as father combines a recognition of God’s authority and God’s care, both of which are implied by fatherhood. This corresponds to the Psalms’ understanding of God. But Jesus then makes them the basis for a distinctive set of petitions. The ones in the first half relate to God’s authority; the ones in the second half appeal more to God’s care.

* Jesus’ prayer is a prayer for God’s sovereignty to become a reality—for God to start ruling in the world. John the Baptist and Jesus have announced that that is what God is doing. The prayer asks God to do it. Compare the later ending—*for the sovereignty is yours…*
* As a lead in to that, it asks that God’s name may be revered in Israel, taking up the priority of prophets such as Ezekiel.
* The doing of God’s “will” spells out the implication of God’s sovereignty being realized. It refers to the fulfilling of God’s purpose or plan or longing for the world (e.g., Isa 42:21; 44:28; 46:10; 53:10; 55:11)—God’s way of implementing sovereignty in the world.
* In connection with asking for God’s sovereignty to be implemented, the prayer also asks for its proclaimers to have their bread each day. They are committed to relying on God for that, as Jesus could not use his power in order to make bread (Luke 4:1-4). They have abandoned their jobs and thus their means of support, and anyway they are not allowed to take their bread with them (Luke 9:3). They are not to worry about food but to trust God (Luke 12:22, 29).
* Being within the realm where God implements that sovereignty also means that forgiveness is a key need. When the salvation of Israel came, if they were not forgiven they would not be among the people who could enjoy it (Luke 1:77). Asking for forgiveness in keeping with our forgiving-ness perhaps reflects a realism about trouble within the community that God comes to save—and not least the proclaimers.
* The prayer finally asks to be spared the testing/temptation. Testing/temptation is where Jesus’ ministry started (Luke 4:1-11) and is what will also come to Jesus’ followers as the crisis develops (Luke 22:28, 40, 46). It is the temptation to turn away from the cross, to refuse to face the cost of going God’s way. In the time of testing/temptation, people fall away (Luke 8:13). Rescue from the evil one spells that out some more.

The Psalms were then more prayers for ordinary life.

But I think I might have changed my mind. Maybe the Lord’s Prayer is itself an example of praying in the Psalms way, a prayer that especially recalls Psalm 145. Because “my God” reigns over all, I can address God as “our Father who is in heaven.” When I urge that God’s name be hallowed, that God’s reign become a reality, that God’s will be done, and ask for bread for each day, for the forgiveness of my wrongdoing, for protection from temptation and deliverance from evil, it is all in keeping with Psalm 145. The liturgical addition to the Lord’s Prayer, “Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever,” sums up the Psalms. Cf. Goldingay, *OT Theology* 3:184-85, with acknowledgment to work by Zenger and Kratz).

# March 10: The Psalms as a Book

### Attendance for last week

### Have you checked the quiz (if you were there?)

### Preparatory Homework:

Homework 10a: Hebrew study of Psalm 139:1-12 (page 85)

Homework 10b: Read Endres, “Psalms and Spirituality,” *Interpretation* 56 (2002), make five comments on page 86, and post them

Homework 10c Fill in the page on “Looking Back” (page 87) and post it

Homework 10d Complete the evaluation detailed on page 88.

Before class, comment on the postings of other people in your group

### Class Time:

6.30 Worship Psalm 119

“Hava nagilah”

6.40 Hebrew study

8.10 Break

8.30 Lecture The Psalms as a book; the Psalms in our worship (page 89)

Psalm 139 (page 90)

### Further reading, if you wish:

Read Ringgren, *The Faith of the Psalmists* 1-36, 47-60.

Walter Brueggemann, “Bounded by Obedience and Praise” (*Journal for the Study of the OT* 50 [1991] 63-92; available in eReserves and in the library as print copy or online)

## Final papers are due by 11.00 p.m. on Friday March 21stHebrew Homework Questions 10a: Psalm 139:1-12

2 לרעי [*lěrē‘î*]: BHS notes that some mss have לְדֵעִי (cf. LXX, Syriac) – one of the easiest of slips (either way). What would the colon then mean?

6 Kethib implies פִלֽאִיָּה [*pil’iyyâ*]which would be the usual spelling (cf. BDB)

11 וָאׂמַר [*wā’ōmar*]: BHS suggests וֽאֺמַר. What difference would that make?

## Homework 10b: “Psalms and Spirituality”

Write five separate sentences of concrete comment on key issues raised by the article (number them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). These can include (for instance) observations on something you find illuminating, or comments on something you disagree with, or questions about something you find puzzling.

## Homework 10c: Looking Back

1. What are the most important things about the psalms that you have discovered this quarter?
2. What are the most important contrasts between what you had been told about prayer and worship or what you thought, and what the Psalms suggest?
3. Are there any “big issues” in study of this part of scripture that continue to cause you difficulty? If so, what are they?
4. What would you like us to cover in the last Monday class?
5. What do you especially need to do more work on?

## Homework 10d: Evaluation

Go to Portico and click on the Evaluation link (note that this has to be done via Portico not via Moodle). Fill in the evaluation. Then on Moodle post under Homework 10d that you have done that.

## Psalms as a Book

B. S. Childs (*Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*) talks about the “canonical shaping” of the Psalter. The Psalter is divided into five books, like the Torah (note the Blessings at the end of 41, 72, 89, 106). Psalm 1 is the introduction to the whole—asking you to treat the Psalter like Torah.

But beyond that there isn’t much structure. People often wish they could get a hang for the structure of the Psalms as a whole, as you might want to get a hang for the structure of Genesis or Isaiah. Unfortunately (?) the Psalter doesn’t work like that—it doesn’t have a structure. But

* instead of looking for a structure of the whole, we can aim to understand the *types* of psalm that keep recurring. The main ones are songs of praise or hymns, prayers or protests (corporate and individual), and thanksgivings or testimonies (corporate and individual). We can then look at how each type works—with Gunkel. Most psalms fit into these main categories. In these class notes, I have allocated them all to a category, but in some cases the designation may be forced.
* in the interrelationship of these the Psalter does suggest a structure of spirituality that we have been looking at the parts of
* note Brueggemann’s suggestion in “Bounded by Obedience and Praise” that you treat the Psalter as a kind of journal that records a journey from obedience via questioning to praise.

## The Books within the Book of Psalms

Behind the Five Books we can see many sub-collections of Psalms that have similar headings or similar subject matter or similar usage; many of these also suggest a background in the Psalms’ use in worship.

David Psalms 3-41, 51-72 (except 10, 33) Asaph Psalms 50, 73-83 (oddly, 50 is separate)

Korah Psalms 42-49 Elohim Psalms 42-83

Korah Psalms 84-85, 87-88 (odd that 86 is David) Kingship Psalms 93, 95-99

Hallelujah Psalms 105-107

Egyptian Hallel, used at Passover 113-118 (113-4 before the meal, 115-8 after – see Mark 14:26)

Psalms of Ascents, used on pilgrimage or in procession 120-134

Great Hallel, also used at Passover 135-36 David Psalms 138-145

Hallel Psalms 146-150

The compilers of the Psalter thus usually (though not invariably) kept earlier groups of Psalms together.

## Psalms in our Worship

1. Many Reformation churches used to use the Psalms alone in the conviction that it is the Bible’s hymnbook, so we ought to use it.
2. It models key aspects of worship  
   Praise: corporate expression of enthusiasm  
   Thanksgiving: the place of testimony in worship  
   Prayer: a corporate expression of pain—rather than leaving people alone with it.
3. It links us with other believers, setting us in the communion of (OT) saints. “We are not alone when we pray; we have more support than most of us realize” (Metz, *The Courage to Pray*, 5).
4. Use the Psalms in a way that corresponds to how they work as literature.

E.g., bear in mind parallelism; Use hymns/prayers/thanksgivings at appropriate points in the liturgy.

1. Hymn versions are easier and can update the theology.But beware of watering them down.

Both official and unofficial selectivity concentrate on the nice praisy bits, omit the hurt/harsh bits.

See John D. Witvliet, John D. *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship* (Eerdmans 2007)

## Issues Illustrated by Psalm 139

### The psalms read you

Not all Psalms fit the types. Beware of commentators’ seeking to make them. There is a “literary psalmody” — a poet or a person praying who writes independently of categories. Is Psalm 139 an example?

It is the openness/ambiguity in the Psalms that means “they read you.”

“Who is Alison?”

“It’s whoever you want it to be. I know who the song relates to, but I’m not going to tell you because the song is for you to listen to. It’s for who it should be in your own mind” (Elvis Costello)

### Imagery in poetry

Much of the power of poetry comes from the use of imagery — but not just of poetry (e.g., “I am the bread of life/the real vine/the good shepherd”).

Imagery

\* tells you what ideas feel like

\* extends your knowledge — makes it possible to see and say new things

Images for God: e.g., God as father, God as giving birth, God as fortress, God as creator….

E.g., Psalms 139; 95; 100

Note the importance of this to doctrine and worship (B. Wren, *What Language Shall I Borrow?*; J. Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai*)

### Problems about images (cf. parables)

They become over-familiar: e.g., salvation

They become concepts/doctrines: e.g., God as creator

They are more culture-relative than we think: e.g., God as father

They become obscure:

e.g., the enemies in the Psalms; Ps 6:8 workers of evil; Ps 22:12-13 bulls, open-mouthed lions

But another usefulness of some such ambiguity is that is enables us to identify with the situation.

Beware of trying to establish what literally was going on (e.g., Pss 42-43: spiritual longing; weeping; insults; geographical isolation; drowning; mourning; oppression; physical attack; injustice; deceit…)

On the obscurity/unfamiliarity of images, see

O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (for the middle-eastern background)

P. D. Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* 48-63 (for the fact that the Psalms describe what a situation *felt* like in terms not so different from ours: “everything was against me, God was miles away, things got on top of me, I was devastated, it was overwhelming”).