

Midterm Examination

Sources:

- › Brown, Francis, S R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, James Strong, and Wilhelm Gesenius. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996.
- › Bullock, C. Hassel. *Encountering the Book of Psalms*. Michigan: Baker Academic, 2018.
 - Note: All Bullock page numbers below are from this 2018 edition and thus significantly different from the earlier edition.
- › Grogan, Geoffrey W. *Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- › Johnston, Philip and David Firth (Editors). *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*. Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2006.
- › Longman III, Tremper. *How to Read the Psalms*. Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 1988.

Part One: Define or describe all of the following in three sentences.

1 alliteration

Alliteration is a poetic technique used in many languages in which initial parts of words have repeated similar sounds, such as repeated consonants or vowels for the first letters of words. In Hebrew poetry, there are many examples of this in the Psalms. One example occurs in Psalm 22:4.

בְּךָ בָּטַחְתָּו אֲבֹתֵינוּ בְּטַחְתָּו וְהִפְלֵטָמוּ:

2 assonance

In a similar way, assonance is a poetic technique related to repeated sounds, but this time, it is when the repeated consonants or vowels appear within words or at the ending of words. This creates a musical quality to the poetic lines, particularly if the repeated sounds are those of sibilance, a form of sustained white noise created with the tongue, such as in the English sounds sh and s. In Hebrew poetry, an example of this is found in Psalm 44:7.

כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ וּמִשְׁנֵאֵינוּ הִבִּישׁוֹת:

3 inclusio

Inclusio is a literary technique that can be used in either prose or poetry and which book-ends a section of text in a beginning and ending statement or similar substance. The beginning and ending sections could be either a repeated line or an antithetic statement, but always reinforcing a similar theme. In poetry specifically, we find the use of inclusio in the Psalms, such as in Psalm 8 where verses 1 and 9 form the inclusio:

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

יְהוָה אֲדֹנָינוּ מִהֲאֲדִיר מִךְ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:

4 lament

In general, a lament is a poetic expression of deep sadness, such as one sung for the death of a person. However, in Hebrew poetry, particularly the Psalms, the genre of lament is more multifaceted than the traditional definition. In particular a lament in the Psalms includes utterances of profound reliance on God, even assurance, that He will correct the wrongs that have been the source of sadness. The prevalent theme of distress in the Psalms juxtaposed with the appeal to the Lord.

5 thanksgiving psalm

A Psalm of Thanksgiving is a classification for which the text itself is overwhelmingly exuberant in gratitude for what the Lord has done. This can be in the individual sense, such as when the Lord saves David from his enemies (Psalm 18), or in the corporate sense, when the Psalmist thanks the Lord for drying up the sea in order to deliver the Israelites (Psalm 66:5-6). Some of the Individual Psalms of Thanksgiving are 18, 30, 31, 32, 40, 66, 92, 116, 118, 120 (Bullock, Table 8.1) and the Community Psalms of Thanksgiving are 65, 66, 107, 118, 124, 129 (Bullock, Table 8.2). Notice how Bullock categorized and parsed Psalms 66 and 118 in both of those categories, given their dual characteristics.

6 ellipsis

In this type of poetic device, a second line leaves out a critical part of the first line that the reader can implicitly fill in. In Hebrew poetry in the Psalms, it is frequently the verb – that is, even the whole subject-verb section of the sentence – that is omitted. One example of ellipsis can be found in Psalm 88 verse 6.

You have put me in the lowest pit.
[You have put me] in the darkest depths.

The section in italics is not explicitly written (only the bolded section), but is understood to be there.

7 Asaph

אֲסָפָה

Asaph was one of the chief musicians of David. He was a Levite and known as the son of Berechiah. He is noted along with Heman and Jeuthun as one appointed for this service, and the *Sons of Asaph* are noted for their service during the dedication of Solomon's Temple and most importantly even for the *re-dedication* events during the much later time of Josiah (2 Chronicles 35). The list of first verses of Psalms with an inscription to Asaph are Psalm 50:1; Psalm 73:1; Psalm 74:1; Psalm 75:1; Psalm 76:1; Psalm 77:1; Psalm 78:1; Psalm 79:1; Psalm 80:1; Psalm 81:1; Psalm 82:1; Psalm 83:1.

8 Korah

קֹרַח

Korah led a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness, as detailed in Numbers 16. Even though his memory is one of disobedience, his progeny, particularly those known as the "Sons of Korah" later became great singers of Psalms and collectors. The list of first verses of Psalms with an inscription to those descended from Korah are Psalm 42:1; Psalm 44:1; Psalm 45:1; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 47:1; Psalm 48:1; Psalm 49:1; Psalm 84:1; Psalm 85:1; Psalm 87:1; Psalm 88:1.

9 hymn

A hymn in the book of Psalms is a song of exuberant praise. It gives glory to the Lord and makes it known that the world should worship Him for His greatness in the history of the nations and in the natural wonders of the universe. They frequently have sections in the order of a Call to Worship, Reasons for Praise, and sometimes ending with a Further Call to Praise.

10 imprecation

In general, an imprecation is curse upon someone, and specifically in the Psalms, it takes the form of the psalmist desiring destruction on the psalmist's enemies. Both Bullock and Longman have extensive treatments of imprecatory psalms, and particularly what they call the "problem" with them, at least the struggle within the field of hermeneutics over how to interpret these wishes of the psalmist in light of Jesus' words to love your enemies. Psalm 69 uses imprecation, and is analyzed in Chapter 10 of Longman, and even Bullock uses the phrase "May they be blotted out of the book of life" (Psalm 69:28) as the tag line of Chapter 14.

11 Davidic psalm

לְדָוִד

Each of the Davidic psalms begins with the phrase לְדָוִד which has variously been translated as "to David", "by David", or most commonly in English, the more general "of David". In this general sense, they are all songs in the style of David, and some contend in the more narrow sense, that they were all written specifically by David. Some of these Psalms also contain a historical inscription of an event in the life of David for which the song was presumably written, though some of these may have been later traditions. All said, there are 73 psalms that contain the usage of לְדָוִד and thus are Davidic Psalms.

12 parallelism

In poetry, parallelism is a technique using repetition to achieve an elegance and beauty through engendering similar thoughts with different words. In the classic example of synonymous parallelism, there are two adjacent lines that say essentially the same thing – that make the same point – but use synonyms, while keeping to the structure congruent. Even though synonymous parallelism is the most common and easily recognizable type of parallelism, there are many variants and flavors, some even using multiple lines to pivot the ideas expressed. For me, parallelism is one of the most enjoyable and characteristic features of the style of the Psalms and Hebrew poetry, to the point that if I hear parallelism in non-Biblical context, my mind immediately harkens back to the Psalms of the Bible.

A wonderful example of parallelism is in Psalm 27:1.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

יְהוָה | אֹרְי וְיִשְׁעֵי מִמֶּי אִירָא

The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

יְהוָה מְעוֹדַחַי מִמֶּי אֶפְחָד :

13 antithetical parallelism

One of the variants of parallelism which I alluded to above is antithetical parallelism. In this flavor, the individual *thoughts* in the two lines are in contrast, yet keep to the congruency of structure and deliver the same overall *message*. In the example of Psalm 44:3 you can see how the first line is in the negative, using לא (not) twice to express what they could not do, whereas the second line is in the positive expressing what God can do.

For not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them,

כִּי לֹא בְחַרְבָּם יָרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ וְזְרוּעָם לֹא-הוֹשִׁיעָה לָמוֹ

But your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them.

כִּי-יִמְיִנְךָ וְזְרוּעֶךָ וְאֹר פָּנֶיךָ כִּי רָצִיתָם :

14 community lament

Community laments are sometimes called “laments of the people” and often reference a national crises. As in all laments of the Psalms which express not only distress but also reliance on the Lord, so too do the community laments which eventually turn the listeners’ attention toward God. In some cases, these songs acknowledge how the specified national distress is due to the God’s rejection of them, even stating the complaint against God. They often include an appeal to how God has done mighty acts in the history of Israel, as well as a vow to praise. Examples of community laments are Psalms 44, 60, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 123, 126, 137 (Bullock. Table 7.5)

15 merismus

A merismus is a literary technique used in poetry of all languages – and in particular Hebrew poetry – for indicating a totality by way of specific, even boundary, instances. In English, we use, in both prose or poetry, phrases such as “from head to toe” to indicate a totality of vestments. In Hebrew, there are many examples of merisma found in the Psalms. Psalm 72:8 uses “from the River to the ends of the earth” to mean the whole known and unknown world by naming first the boundary of Israelite territory – in this case, the River Euphrates – to the edges of creation.

And He shall have dominion from sea to sea

וַיִּרְדֵּךְ מֵיַם עַד־יָם

And from the River to the ends of the earth.

וּמִנְהַר עַד־אַפְסֵי־אָרֶץ:

Part Two: Answer all of the following questions in 100 words or more.

1 What is a hymn? List the major components of a hymn in the Psalter. Select one of the hymns of the Psalter and outline its sections.

According to Longman, hymns are Psalms of exuberant praise and rejoicing of God’s goodness. Essentially, they are the “showstoppers” of the Psalter. In some sense, hymns represent the telos of the psalms, the ultimate goal that the various genres are leading toward. Bullock points at that even though laments are predominant in the beginning the hymns of glorious praise far outnumber them in Books IV and V near the end of the Psalter. There is a crescendo, a goal, a trajectory, that begins in the depths of distress (that Johnston’s book carefully highlights) and raises the worshiper to the heights of glory.

Hymns start out with a section known as the “Call to Worship”. Next comes the enumerations of the reasons for why the Lord should be praised. This middle section is usually the largest section and can often be distinguished by use of the word “for” to indicate the reasons for praising. Finally, a hymn might end with additional calls and admonitions to worship and praise.

Psalm 96 has all three sections and can be outlined as:

1. Call to Worship: Verses 1 to 3
(“Sing to the LORD...Sing to the LORD”)
2. Reasons for Praise, Middle Sections: Verses 4 to 9
 - a. Reasons: Verses 4 to 6
 - i. Reason 1: Verse 4
(“For...”)
 - ii. Reason 2: Verses 5 to 6
(“For...”)
 - b. Reiteration of Praise now referencing the character of God found in the Reasons: Verses 7 to 9
(“Give to the LORD...Give to the LORD”)
3. Further Call to Praise: Verses 10 to 13

Verses 1 to 3

Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!

שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ :

Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בְּרַכּוּ שְׁמוֹ בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם יְשׁוּעָתוֹ :

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!

סַפְּרוּ בַּגּוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּכָל־הָעַמִּים נִפְלְאוֹתָיו :

Verses 4 to 6

For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.

כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהִלָּל מְאֹד נִוְרָא הוּא עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים :

For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

כִּי | כָּל־אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אִלִּילִים וַיְהוָה שָׁמַיִם עָשָׂה :

Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

הוֹדוּהֶדָּר לְפָנָיו עֹז וְתִפְאֶרֶת בְּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ :

Verses 7 to 9

Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!

הִבּוּ לַיהוָה מִשְׁפָּחוֹת עַמִּים הִבּוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז :

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!

הִבּוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ שְׂאוּ־מִנְחָה וּבֵאוּ לְחַצְרוֹתָיו :

Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיהוָה בְּהִדְרַת־קֹדֶשׁ תִּילּוּ מִפְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ :

Verses 10 to 13

Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”

אִמְרוּ בַּגּוֹיִם | יְהוָה מָלָךְ אֶרֶץ־תְּכֹן תָּבִיל בַּל־תִּמּוֹט יָדִין עַמִּים

בְּמִישְׁרִים :

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

יִשְׂמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתִגַּל הָאָרֶץ יִרְעַם הַיָּם וּמְלֵאוֹ :

Let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

יַעֲלֹז דַּי וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ אֶז יִרְנֶנּוּ כָּל־עַצְיָיִעַר :

Before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.

לְפָנַי יְהוָה | לֵי בָא כִּי בָא לְשִׁפְטֵי הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט־תִּבְלָל בְּצִדְקָא וְעַמִּים
בְּאַמוֹנָתוֹ :

2 Outline the Psalter. In this outline mention the divisions of the Psalter and the number of psalms in each division. Mention special features such as the royal, torah and thanksgiving themes.

By grouping the Psalter into five sections, the books were intentionally made to parallel the five books of Moses, as pointed out by Longman. Indeed, the final lines of these five groupings all end in a cadential praise to the Lord in the form of a doxology. Even the psalm that concludes Book I, Psalm 41 – which is a lament – has for its final verse:

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.

The Books of the Psalter – with a rough outline – are as follows:

1. **Book I: 1-41**
 - a. Introduction to Themes (1-3)
 - b. David Psalms (3-41)
 - c. Psalms of Trust, Thanksgiving, Laments
 - d. Yahweh emphasized
2. **Book II: 42-72**
 - a. Korah Psalms (42-49)
 - b. Elohim emphasized
3. **Book III: 73-89**
 - a. Asaph Psalms (73-83)
 - b. Elohim emphasized
4. **Book IV: 90-106**
 - a. Kingship Psalms
 - b. Torah and Covenant Themes
 - c. Beginnings of Hallelujah (Yahweh emphasized from here on out)
5. **Book V: 107-150**
 - a. Egyptian Hallel (113-118)
 - b. Songs of Ascents (120-134)
 - c. Final Praise

The first three books contain a preponderance of laments, whereas the final two books are dominated by hymns of praise, thus giving an overall upward trajectory, lifting our eyes toward the mount for worship. The initial three psalms deliberately introduce the critical themes used throughout the whole book, namely the Torah (Psalm 1), the King (Psalm 2), and Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Distress (Psalm 3).

3 What is parallelism? List at least 3 types of parallelism and define how it works. Provide an example of each type of parallelism.

Parallelism is a poetic device that uses repetition within multiple lines, frequently to say the same thing, but with different words. In the simplest form, one could imagine writing a sentence, duplicating it, and then swapping out individual words with other ones. Like so:

In olden times, friends enjoyed playing games around the table.

Duplicate it:

In olden times, friends enjoyed playing games around the table.
In olden times, friends enjoyed playing games around the table.

Swap out words and phrase for similar ones:

In olden times, friends enjoyed playing games around the table.
Before modernization, families played chess together at home.

(One can imagine the above parallelism being used in a lament about how technology has taken away family time.)

In general the following forms of parallelism are identified: synonymous, antithetical, synthetic, emblematic, repetition, pivot, and chiasmic.

I will single out just three: *synthetic*, *emblematic*, and *pivot*.

What *synthetic parallelism* does differently than the other is that the second line helps complete the thought, or even adds a notion, to the thought on the first line. One example is Psalm 12:1

Save, O LORD, **for the godly one is gone;**
For the faithful have vanished, from among the children of man.

I have bolded the parallel parts. Thus you can see that the second line omits the “Save, O LORD” however it also adds to the thought by clarifying “from among the children of man”.

As for *emblematic parallelism*, the emphasis is on the analogy itself. It is not merely swapping in and out similar words to obtain the similar thought, but rather it makes a comparison using a simile and with that symbolism, makes a parallel construct. For example, in Psalm 42:1.

As a deer pants for flowing streams,
So pants my soul for you, O God.

It is more than just two parallel lines of something longing for something else, but rather that the psalmist is *like* a deer, and that the craving of the flowing streams is *like* the craving of the psalmist’s soul for God.

Finally in pivot parallelism, there are not just two lines, but rather three, with the middle line being the link between the first and last line. For example, the following three lines from Psalm 98 exhibit pivot parallelism:

The LORD **demonstrates** his power to deliver;
In the **sight** of the nations;
He **reveals** his justice.

I have highlighted in bold the parallelism of God’s visibility in all of this, but note that the deliverance mentioned in the first line and justice mentioned in the third line are tied together by concept of the nations in the middle line.

Part Three: Choose the correct answer

1 According to Johnston, the following are causes of stress in the Psalms:

- a. God
- b. Enemies
- c. Self
- d. All of the above
- e. None of the above

Longman. Pages 74-78.

2 According to Johnston, distress is one of the most common features of the Psalms.

True (X) ; False ()

Johnston. Page 63.

3 The lament of the individual is the only form of a lament in the Psalter

True () ; False (X)

Johnston. Page 67.

4 According the Gunkel, the components of a lament are the following:

- a. address and introductory petition
- b. lament
- c. confession of trust
- d. petition
- e. vow of praise
- f. Prayer for enemies
- g. All of the above
- h. A, B, C, D and E

Bullock. Page 125.

5 According to Longman, the book of the Deuteronomy is the most frequently quoted book in the New Testament.

True () ; False (X)

Longman. Page 65. *Instead of "Deuteronomy" it should be "Psalms"*

6 According to Longman, one of the two errors connected with the interpretation of the book of Psalms is to neglect the original setting of the Psalms.

True (X) ; False ()

Longman. Page 73. *And the other error is to miss the anticipation.*

7 According to Bullock, the most frequently occurring type of psalm is lament.

Bullock. Page 112-113, 127. *Compare Table 6.1 to Table 7.1 where psalms of praise are numbered at 30 and psalms of lament (either community or individual) are numbered at 42.*

8 One of the challenges of laments is the identification of the Enemies in the Psalm.

Bullock. Page 132.

9 According to Johnston, one of the causes of distress in the Psalms is the person himself/herself.

True (X) ; False ()

Johnston. Page 76.

10 The 2 types of laments are laments of the people and laments of the individual.

Bullock. Page 125. *Using Westermann and Gunkel's terminology. Also known as "community" and "individual" laments.*

11 Psalms of Trust are psalms that express thanks for deliverance that YHWH has provided.

True () ; False (X)

Bullock. Page 143. *Instead of Psalms of "Trust" it should be "Thanksgiving".*

12 There are interior lament components or parts that comprise both individual and community psalms of trust.

Bullock. Page 170. *"This crisis is general visible in the words of the psalm. Although it does not give rise to a lament as such, it nevertheless leaves its mark on the psalmist's memory."*

13 The declaration of trouble is the first and most important part of a psalm of trust.

True () ; False (X)

Bullock. Page 159. *Instead of declaration of "trouble" it should be "trust", and it does not always have to be first.*

14 Psalm 23 is the psalm of trust par excellence.

Bullock. Page 165.

15 According to Longman, the idea of covenant is a main idea of the Psalms.

True (X) ; False ()

Longman. Page 53. *Longman says that covenant is the central theological concept behind the Psalms.*

16 The typical Near Eastern treaty contained the following parts.

- a. () Identification of the parties making the treaty.
- b. () Historical prologue
- c. () Law
- d. () Blessing and curses
- e. () Witnesses
- f. () Deposit of treaty text
- g. (X) All of the above
- h. () None of the above

Longman. Page 55

17 Blesses and curses like the ones found in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 are not related to the theology of the Psalms.

True () ; False (**X**)

Longman. Page 55.

18 The major theme of the Wisdom Psalms is the presence of __Wisdom Motifs__.

Bullock. Page 198.

19 Two criteria for the determination of Wisdom Psalms are wisdom literary themes like ones found in Wisdom literature of the Old Testament and formal wisdom literary characteristics.

True (**X**) ; False ()

Bullock. Page 208. Note: Formal Wisdom Literary Characteristics = proverbs, wisdom admonitions, “blessed” formula, etc.

20 Torah Psalms focus on the __Torah__.

Bullock. Page 210. “Torah Psalms ... focus upon the Torah, with its multiple facets of theological expression.”