

# Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 22, Poetic Literature Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 22, Poetic Literature, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Phillips' lecture focuses on Hebrew poetry, particularly the Psalms, within the Old Testament.** She discusses key features of Hebrew poetry, contrasting it with Western poetry and highlighting the importance of parallelism, including synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic forms. **The lecture explores figurative language, acrostics, and numbered patterns as poetic devices.** Dr. Phillips then transitions to the Psalms, emphasizing their role as human words directed to God and covering various Psalm genres, like laments, Thanksgiving Psalms, and hymns of praise. **The lecture concludes with an examination of Messianic and imprecatory Psalms, offering considerations for understanding their challenging content.**

**2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 22 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → OT Introduction → OT Lit).**



**Phillips\_OTLit\_Sessi  
on22.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 22, Poetic Literature

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Elaine Phillips' lecture on Hebrew Poetry and the Psalms.

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 22 - Hebrew Poetry, Psalms, Genres

##### I. Overview:

This lecture provides an introduction to Hebrew poetry, focusing on its characteristics and how to understand it, with a specific emphasis on the Book of Psalms. Dr. Phillips highlights the importance of recognizing poetic structure and figurative language in interpreting these texts and provides a categorization of different types of Psalms.

##### II. Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Importance of Poetry in the Old Testament:**
  - Approximately one-third of the Old Testament is written in poetic form. "If we're going to think of that whole body of literature that we've got in what we're calling the Old or the First Testament, a third of it is in poetic expression."
  - Poetry serves as a "wonderful conduit for God's conveying his truth to people."
  - It is a way to express truth by carefully choosing words and using visual and visceral imagery.
- **Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry:**
  - **Parallelism:** This is a foundational element, involving the restatement, contrasting, or building upon ideas in subsequent lines. "Its structure is based on a balance. It's almost conceptual rhythm, if you will, as opposed to sound rhythm. This is a conceptual rhythm."
  - **Synonymous Parallelism:** Restating the same idea using synonyms. Example: "Let's break their chains and throw off their fetters" (Psalm 2:3).
  - **Antithetical Parallelism:** Presenting contrasting ideas. Example: "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (Psalm 1:6).

- **Synthetic Parallelism:** Building upon an idea in successive lines. Example: Psalm 1:1-3, describing the blessed person who avoids wickedness and delights in God's law.
- **Figurative Language:** Metaphors, similes, and personification are used to create vivid imagery and deeper understanding.
- Personification: "The sea looked and fled, Jordan turned back, the mountains skipped like rams" (Psalm 114).
- Metaphor: "You are a shield around me, oh Lord."
- Simile: "He's like a tree planted by streams of water" (Psalm 1:3).
- **Acrostics:** Some poems use the Hebrew alphabet sequentially to begin each line or section, indicating comprehensiveness. Example: Psalm 119. The acrostic structure suggests "a comprehensive statement about X," conveying the "utter sufficiency of the word of God."
- **Numbered Patterns:** Using numerical sequences to emphasize comprehensiveness and order. Example: "One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard" (Psalm 62:11).
- **The Book of Psalms:**
  - Reflects human words directed back to God, providing a model for expressing a full range of emotions. "They're reflecting human words back to God. And that's vitally important...the Psalms give us really a pattern, a paradigm for expressing the whole range of human emotions."
  - The Psalms are not "lily-livered, milk-toast types that say all the right things," but express genuine emotions and thoughts.
  - **Psalms Titles:** Provide information about authorship, circumstances, and musical directions. Example: Psalm 51, "after David's sin with Bathsheba."
- **Arrangement of the Psalms:**
  - Divided into five books, paralleling the five books of Moses.
  - The Book of Psalms, as the beginning of the *Ketuvim* (writings), echoes the Torah's emphasis on meditating on God's law.

- **Basic Teachings in the Psalms:**

- Reveal God's majesty, mighty works, and covenant love (hesed). The Psalms illustrate "the majesty of God and the sinfulness of human beings."
- Emphasize the need for repentance and deliverance.
- Express a deep love for God's word.
- Demonstrate a determination to live in a way that pleases God.

- **Categories of Psalms:**

- **Laments:** Express distress and anguish, often including an expression of trust in God. Examples: Psalms 42, 43, 137.
- **Penitential Psalms:** Express sorrow over sin and recognition of the need for God's forgiveness. Examples: Psalms 32, 51. The penitential Psalm is when somebody realizes the "only hope is if I cast myself at the foot of the cross...and say, I'm a mess, I've completely messed this up, I need God."
- **Thanksgiving Psalms:** Express gratitude to God for his actions. Example: Psalm 118.
- **Hymns of Praise:** Praise God for his majesty and creation. Example: Psalm 8.
- **Salvation History Psalms:** Focus on God's work on behalf of Israel. Example: Psalm 78.
- **Songs of Zion:** Focus on Jerusalem and the Temple. Example: Psalm 84.
- **Songs of Trust:** Express trust in God's provision and care. Example: Psalm 23.
- **Messianic Psalms:** Focus on the anointed one (Messiah). Examples: Psalms 22, 110.
- Psalm 22: Has connections to Jesus' experience on the cross. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- Psalm 110: Links kingship and priesthood, foreshadowing Jesus as king and priest after the order of Melchizedek.
- **Imprecatory Psalms:** Call upon God to curse enemies. Example: Psalm 109.
- **Imprecatory Psalms Considerations:**
- These psalms are part of scripture and cannot be ignored.

- The writer asks God to deal with the problem, not taking vengeance personally.
- The writer is concerned for God's glory and recognizes his own sinfulness.
- There is hope for repentance even in the face of judgment.

### **III. Important Quotes:**

- "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, both now and forevermore" (referencing Psalm 125:2, to explain the geographical context).
- "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1, as quoted by Jesus on the cross).
- "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek'" (Psalm 110:4).

### **IV. Key Takeaways:**

- Hebrew poetry, especially the Psalms, is a rich and diverse form of expression that provides insight into God's character, human emotions, and the relationship between God and his people.
- Understanding the characteristics of Hebrew poetry, such as parallelism and figurative language, is essential for accurate interpretation.
- The Psalms offer a model for expressing a full range of human emotions to God, from joy and praise to lament and repentance.
- Even the difficult and potentially troubling content of the imprecatory Psalms can offer insight into the human response to injustice and a model for bringing those concerns before God.

## 4. Study Guide: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 22, Poetic Literature

### Hebrew Poetry & Psalms: A Study Guide

#### Review Topics

- **Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry:** Understanding its unique features in contrast to classic Western poetry.
- **Parallelism:** Synonymous, Antithetical, and Synthetic.
- **Figurative Language:** Personification, Metaphor, Simile.
- **Acrostics:** Structure and Purpose, especially Psalm 119.
- **Numbered Patterns:** Their significance and use.
- **Psalms Titles:** Information gleaned about circumstances and authorship.
- **Structure of the Psalter:** Five books and their parallel to the Pentateuch.
- **Basic Teachings in the Psalms:** God's nature (Hesed, Emet, Emunah), sinfulness of humanity, repentance, deliverance, love for God's Word, determination to live righteously.
- **Types of Psalms:** Laments, Penitential, Thanksgiving, Hymns of Praise, Salvation History, Songs of Zion, Songs of Trust.
- **Messianic Psalms:** Focus on the "Anointed One" (Mashiach/Christos).
- **Imprecatory Psalms:** Asking for divine judgment, considerations for interpretation.

#### Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary structural characteristic that distinguishes Hebrew poetry from classic Western poetry, and how does this characteristic aid in translation?
2. Explain the difference between synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic parallelism, providing an example of each from the Psalms.
3. How does personification function in Hebrew poetry, and what effect does it have on the reader?

4. What is an acrostic psalm, and what is the purpose of using this structure, as seen in Psalm 119?
5. What kind of information can we learn from the titles of Psalms, and why is that information valuable?
6. How does the five-book structure of the Psalter mirror the structure of the Torah, and what might be the significance of this parallel?
7. Name three basic teachings or themes that are commonly found throughout the Psalms.
8. Describe the characteristics of a lament psalm and explain its purpose within the Psalter.
9. What defines a Messianic Psalm, and can you name one such Psalm along with a key theme?
10. What are imprecatory Psalms, and how should they be interpreted in light of Christian theology?

### **Quiz Answer Key**

1. Hebrew poetry relies on conceptual parallelism rather than rhyme and rhythm. This makes translation easier because the meaning and structure can be preserved across languages without the constraints of phonetic elements.
2. Synonymous parallelism restates the first line with similar words, such as Psalm 2:3 ("Let us break their chains and throw off their fetters.") Antithetical parallelism presents contrasting ideas (Psalm 1:6). Synthetic parallelism builds upon the first line to develop the thought (Psalm 1:1-3).
3. Personification gives human qualities to inanimate objects or abstract concepts, heightening emotional impact and aiding in understanding spiritual truths through relatable imagery, as seen in Psalm 114 where mountains skip like rams.
4. An acrostic psalm is one in which each line (or group of lines) begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This structure signifies comprehensiveness, implying a complete treatment of the subject, such as the focus on God's Word in Psalm 119.
5. Psalm titles can provide information about the circumstances under which a psalm was written, the author, or musical notations. This offers valuable context

for understanding the psalm's meaning and historical relevance, such as Psalm 51 relating to David's sin with Bathsheba.

6. The Psalter is arranged into five books which parallels the five books of Moses in the Torah. This deliberate structure emphasizes themes of instruction and echoes God's law.
7. Common themes include the majesty and might of God, the sinfulness of humanity and need for deliverance, and a deep love for and commitment to God's word.
8. Lament Psalms express deep sorrow, anguish, and distress over personal or corporate suffering. They often conclude with a statement of trust in God's ultimate goodness and sovereignty.
9. Messianic Psalms focus on the person and work of the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. Psalm 22, with its themes of suffering and eventual triumph, is considered a Messianic Psalm foretelling aspects of Jesus' crucifixion.
10. Imprecatory Psalms call upon God to curse enemies and seek vengeance for injustices. These psalms should be interpreted considering the writer is asking God for justice, not taking personal vengeance, and recognizing God's glory as the ultimate motivation.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of parallelism in Hebrew poetry, illustrating its various forms and how they contribute to the overall meaning and impact of the text.
2. Explore the range of emotions expressed in the Psalms, providing specific examples of different types of psalms and explaining how they serve as a "paradigm" for human expression to God.
3. Analyze the concept of God presented in the Psalms, focusing on key attributes like Hesed, Emet, and Emunah, and how these attributes are revealed through various poetic devices and thematic elements.
4. Compare and contrast the different types of Psalms (e.g., laments, thanksgiving psalms, hymns of praise), discussing their characteristic structures, themes, and purposes within the Psalter.



5. Examine the challenges and considerations involved in interpreting imprecatory Psalms, offering insights into their historical context, theological implications, and relevance for contemporary readers.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Parallelism:** A structural feature of Hebrew poetry where ideas are balanced and reinforced through repetition, synonymous expressions, antithetical statements, or synthetic development.
- **Synonymous Parallelism:** Restating an idea using similar words or phrases in consecutive lines.
- **Antithetical Parallelism:** Presenting contrasting ideas or statements in consecutive lines.
- **Synthetic Parallelism:** Building upon an initial idea by adding further thoughts or descriptions in subsequent lines.
- **Figurative Language:** Language that uses figures of speech to create vivid imagery, including personification, metaphors, and similes.
- **Personification:** Giving human attributes to inanimate objects, abstract concepts, or animals.
- **Metaphor:** A figure of speech that directly compares two unlike things without using "like" or "as."
- **Simile:** A figure of speech that compares two unlike things using "like" or "as."
- **Acrostic:** A literary structure where the first letter of each line (or stanza) spells out a word, phrase, or the sequence of the alphabet.
- **Hesed:** A Hebrew word meaning "covenant loyalty," "unfailing love," or "steadfast kindness," often used to describe God's relationship with his people.
- **Emet:** A Hebrew word meaning "truth" or "verity."
- **Emunah:** A Hebrew word meaning "faithfulness" or "fidelity."
- **Lament:** A passionate expression of grief, sorrow, or regret.
- **Penitential Psalm:** A psalm expressing sorrow for sin and a desire for forgiveness.

- **Thanksgiving Psalm:** A psalm expressing gratitude to God for his blessings and deliverance.
- **Hymn of Praise:** A song or poem praising God for his attributes and works.
- **Messianic Psalm:** A psalm that refers to or foreshadows the coming of the Messiah.
- **Imprecatory Psalm:** A psalm that calls for judgment, vengeance, or curses upon enemies.
- **Mashiach:** Hebrew for "anointed," referring to a person set apart for a special purpose, often associated with kings, priests, and prophets.
- **Christos:** Greek for "anointed," equivalent to the Hebrew "Mashiach," used to refer to Jesus as the Messiah.

## 5. FAQs on Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 22, Poetic Literature, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Psalms FAQ

- **What percentage of the Old Testament is poetry, and why is poetry a valuable form for conveying God's truth?**
- Approximately one-third of the Old Testament is written in poetic form. Poetry is a powerful way to express truth because it uses carefully chosen words, visual imagery, and parallelism. This combination raises our sensitivity to spiritual truths, makes it easier to memorize scripture, and allows for conveying meaning without relying on specific rhyme and rhythm found in classic Western poetry, thus making it translatable across cultures.
- **What is parallelism in Hebrew poetry, and what are the main types?**
- Parallelism is a structure in Hebrew poetry where the thought or idea in one line is reflected or expanded upon in the subsequent line. The main types of parallelism are synonymous (restating the first line with synonyms), antithetical (presenting a contrasting idea), and synthetic (building upon the first line to develop the thought further). These forms are often interwoven and contribute significantly to the meaning and memorability of the text.
- **How does Hebrew poetry differ from classic Western poetry? What is the significance of this difference in translation?**
- Hebrew poetry primarily differs from classic Western poetry in its lack of evident rhyme and rhythm. Instead, it relies heavily on parallelism, a conceptual rhythm of balanced ideas. This is significant for translation because it allows the core meaning of the text to be conveyed into different languages without the challenge of maintaining specific sounds or rhythmic patterns. This makes Hebrew poetry more universally accessible and understandable across cultures and throughout history.

- **What are some common examples of figurative language used in Hebrew poetry?**
- Common examples of figurative language include personification (giving human attributes to abstract qualities or concepts, such as the sea fleeing), metaphors (creating unusual comparisons, such as God being a shield), and similes (using "like" or "as" to make comparisons, such as the righteous being like a tree planted by water). These figures of speech enrich the text and make it more memorable and impactful.
- **What are Psalm titles, and what kind of information can they provide?**
- Psalm titles are the introductory lines preceding the Psalms, often providing information about authorship, circumstances, musical notations, or historical context. They can tell us who wrote the Psalm (e.g., "of David"), the occasion when it was written (e.g., after David's sin with Bathsheba in Psalm 51), or musical instructions. While their origins are debated, they offer valuable insights into the background and interpretation of the Psalms.
- **What are the five books of Psalms, and how does this arrangement relate to the Pentateuch (five books of Moses)?**
- The Psalms are arranged into five books, mirroring the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch). This arrangement is likely intentional and highlights the parallel between the Psalms as Israel's hymnal and the Torah as their foundational law. The Psalter, beginning the "writings" section of the Hebrew Bible, begins with an exhortation to meditate on the Torah, reiterating the Torah's message to meditate on it day and night.
- **What are Messianic Psalms, and what are some examples?**
- Messianic Psalms are those that focus on someone who is anointed, referring to the Messiah (Christ). Key examples include Psalm 22, which speaks of suffering and abandonment, and Psalm 110, which highlights the Messiah's dual role as king and priest in the order of Melchizedek. These Psalms are often quoted in the New Testament and understood to be prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

- **What are Imprecatory Psalms, and how should they be understood?**
- Imprecatory Psalms are those that ask God to curse enemies. They are a challenging part of scripture because they express strong feelings of anger and vengeance. They can be understood as the psalmist asking God to administer justice, recognizing God's glory, and recognizing themselves as sinners in need of God's mercy. The psalmist is turning the situation over to God, rather than taking matters into their own hands.