

## Waltke, Psalms, Session 5, Resources from Notebooklm

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

### 1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 5, Psalm 4 on Hebrew Poetry, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke **explains** Psalm 4, focusing on its **structure** as Hebrew poetry. He **analyzes** the psalm's superscription, addressing its genre and authorship, then **examines** its different sections, including addresses to God and apostates, and petitions. Waltke **contrasts** traditional and modern interpretations of Hebrew parallelism, **highlighting** the work of Robert Lowth and James Kugel. Finally, he **connects** Psalm 4's themes of trust and peace to New Testament concepts, using Psalm 23 as a further example of poetic imagery and structure.

2. 17-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 5 – 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 → Psalms → Waltke).



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### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Bruce Waltke on the Psalms and Hebrew poetry:

#### **Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalms and Hebrew Poetry**

**Source:** Excerpts from "Waltke\_Psalms\_EN\_Lecture05.pdf"

**Date:** 2024

**Overview:** This document summarizes Dr. Waltke's lecture (Session 5) focusing on Psalm 4 and the characteristics of Hebrew Poetry. The lecture moves from an in-depth analysis of Psalm 4, breaking down its structure and themes, to a broader discussion of Hebrew poetry's unique features, including parallelism and the impact of modern scholarship on its interpretation.

#### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

##### **I. Psalm 4 Analysis:**

- **Superscript:**
  - The superscript provides genre, authorship (often David), and historical context.
  - The term "mizmor" indicates a song with musical accompaniment.
  - Waltke notes the possibility that Hebrew accents were originally musical notations or hand signals for musicians, referencing the work of musicologist Susanna Hauk-Ventura.
  - He recounts an anecdote about her attempt to reconstruct temple music, highlighting the subjective nature of musical taste.
- **Structure of Psalm 4:**
  - The Psalm is divided into four main sections:
    1. **Address to God & Introductory Petitions:** (v.1-2) Includes a plea for an audience with God and relief from distress.
    2. **Address to Highborn Apostates:** (v.2-5) An address to those who have lost faith in David and God, characterized by accusations and admonitions.
    3. **Petitions:** (v.6-8) Requests for God's favor and joy.
    4. **Confidence & Praise:** (v.8-9) Expresses trust in God and a resolve to rest in peace.

- Within the address to the apostates:
- **Accusation:** "How long will you turn my glory into shame?" (Turning to false gods.)
- **Admonition to Know the King:** Waltke argues for three ways they can know their king: through "the word of the prophet, the word of God, the spirit of God, and the works of God."
- **Imperatives to Apostates:** "Tremble and do not sin." Waltke discusses the meaning of the Hebrew word "rigzu," arguing it means "to tremble in fear" rather than "to be angry" (as translated in the Septuagint and used by Paul).
- "Search your hearts and be silent" - meant to encourage authentic introspection and conscience confirmation. "When you're alone and you don't act rashly and hypocritically to please other people, let your own heart confirm you in your faith."
- "Offer the sacrifices of the righteous, and trust in the I Am."
- **Key Theological Points in Psalm 4:**
- The distress experienced in the psalm is due to a loss of faith in leadership, and ultimately in God.
- The Psalm moves from personal distress to confident trust in God.
- The final resolve to sleep peacefully signifies faith even with unanswered prayer. "His prayer, the psalm ends with unanswered prayer, but he goes to sleep, not worried, not fretting, knowing that God will answer his prayer. He knows his God and he knows who he is."
- Waltke connects this Psalm to passages in Isaiah, Psalms and Philippians about trusting the Lord. He includes a story of a student in Vietnam who found solace in the verse "I will lie down in peace and I will sleep for you alone make me dwell in safety."
- He emphasizes how the Psalm remains relevant today in times of distress.

## II. Introduction to Hebrew Poetry:

- **Importance of Genre:** Understanding the genre of a text is crucial to interpreting it correctly.

- He emphasizes that half of the Old Testament is poetry, highlighting God's appreciation for aesthetic expression, even if many people don't understand or appreciate it.
- **Definition of Poetry:** Quoting Barbara Herrnstein Schmidt, Waltke defines poetry as "a more restricted form of speech," characterized by "a sustained rhythm and a continuously operating principle of organization."
- **Key Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry:**
  - No Rhyme:** Hebrew words are inflected, making rhyme natural, and hence not a feature of Hebrew poetry.
  - Unknown Meter:** Meter is not a clear feature in Hebrew poetry.
  - Parallelism:** The core principle of Hebrew poetry, involves saying a line and then another related line to reinforce or clarify the first.
- It is "the primary operating principle of organization in Hebrew poetry, which also gives it a sustained rhythm."
- Waltke uses the metaphor of stereophonic sound to describe the richness gained from parallelism.
- **Terseness:** Hebrew poetry is concise, unlike the "motion picture" effect of prose, it's like "a slideshow" of "one picture after another".
- The poem about Jael in Judges is a good example of how it is terse and gets to the point, unlike the narrative in prose. "Water he asked, milk she gave. In a princely bowl, she offered him curds."
- **Heightened Style:** Hebrew poetry uses concrete images and figures of speech, and therefore is "less clear," which has "profound hermeneutical implications."
- It demands a more flexible reading than prose.
- **Moses and Prophecy:** The passage in Numbers 12 about Moses' leadership reveals a hierarchy, with Moses receiving a more direct form of revelation ("face to face clearly and not in riddles"), making prophets using figurative language subservient to the clearer understanding of Moses.
- Waltke applies this understanding to the New Testament, making the teachings of Christ have priority.
- **What it is not:** Hebrew poetry is neither patterned, metered, or rhymed.

### III. Parallelism in Detail:

- **Bishop Robert Lowth:**Waltke acknowledges Lowth as the "first scholarly work on parallelism" in 1732.
- He defined it as "the correspondence of one verse aligned with another...equivalent or contrasted with it in sense or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction."
- Lowth's view of parallelism involved a "shadow" effect where the second line reflects the first.
- **Lowth's Three Types of Parallelism:****Synonymous Parallelism:** The second line restates the first with similar meaning (e.g., "He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath.").
- **Antithetical Parallelism:** The second line contrasts with the first (e.g., "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked perish.").
- **Synthetic Parallelism:** The second line adds to the first, like prose. (e.g. "who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law, day and night.")
- **Terminology:**The lecture introduces terms: stick, colon, bicolon, tricolon and hemi-stick to understand structural elements of Hebrew poetry.
- **The Challenge to Lowth (James Kugel & Robert Alter):**Waltke highlights a shift in scholarship since 1980.
- Kugel argues that the second line is not a mere restatement, but rather emphatic, adding to, and reinforcing the first.
- The second line is not a "throwaway shadow," but an emphatic statement.
- The second line enriches and expands on the first. "The B verset was connected to the A, had something in common with it, but was not expected to be or regarded as a mere restatement."
- Waltke compares the two viewpoints: Lowth is "swan and shadow," while Kugel is "swan, goose, and gander," where the second image adds perspective.
- **Kugel's Impact:**His work led to "a disastrous effect on subsequent criticism. Because of it, synonymy was imposed where it did not exist. Sharpness was lost."

- Waltke now believes that there is no synonymous parallelism, because the different words mean different things, and therefore adds something to it.
- **Examples of Kugel's view:** Psalm 22:18 - division of garments vs casting lots for cloak.
- Zechariah 9:9 / Matthew 21 - donkey vs colt of a donkey
- Psalm 2:5 rebuke vs terrify - both are related but different, one from God, one a consequence.
- **Hebrew Accents:** The principle of continuous dichotomy and how accents break up sentences into different parts (A/B, AA/AB, BA/BB) in a way that is crucial to interpretation. He gives an example in Isaiah 53.

#### IV. Psalm 23 Analysis (Brief):

- **Structure:** Waltke divides the psalm into three vignettes:
  1. **Shepherd and Sheep:** Images of pasture, rest, water, and protection.
  2. **Sheikh and Guest:** A banquet scene in a tent, providing refreshment and protection from enemies.
  3. **Temple:** A place of eternal dwelling, a reality of God's goodness.
- **Interpretation:** The imagery of the shepherd represents God's provision, restoration, and protection.
- The banquet in the tent parallels the abundance found in the pasture.
- The temple represents the ultimate fulfillment of God's goodness and an eternal dwelling place.
- The psalm switches between talking about God (to the congregation) and talking to God.
- The transition from shepherd to tent happens at the end of verse four "for you are with me" which creates a "Janus" - a transition from one section to the next.
- **New Testament:** Jesus is both the "sheep who himself walked with his father as his shepherd, but he has now become our shepherd."

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Waltke's lecture offers an insightful blend of detailed textual analysis and broader theoretical understanding of Hebrew poetry. He highlights the importance of understanding the nuances of language, genre, and structure to accurately interpret the Psalms. He demonstrates how modern scholarship has reshaped the interpretation of Hebrew poetry, and challenges conventional readings by encouraging listeners to consider how each line of a poem adds to the previous, instead of simply restating it. His approach blends academic rigor with practical application, emphasizing the relevance of the Psalms for believers today.

## 4. Waltke, Session 5, Psalms & Hebrew Poetry Study Guide

### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What does the term "superscript" refer to in the context of the Psalms, and what kind of information does it typically provide?
2. According to Waltke, what is the basic meaning of the Hebrew word "mizmor," and how does it relate to the Psalms?
3. How did Susanna Hauk-Ventura attempt to reconstruct temple music, and what was unique about her approach?
4. What are the four main parts into which Waltke divides Psalm 4, and what is the focus of each section?
5. In Psalm 4, who are the "highborn apostates," and what is the central issue that the psalmist addresses with them?
6. What is the significance of the word "rigzu" in Psalm 4:4, and why does Waltke translate it as "tremble" rather than "be angry?"
7. According to Waltke, what does it mean to "search your hearts and be silent" in Psalm 4:4, and how should it be applied to the apostates?
8. What are the three restrictions of Hebrew poetry identified by Waltke, and how do they contribute to its unique form?
9. What is the concept of "parallelism" in Hebrew poetry, and how does it function to convey meaning?
10. How did the scholarly understanding of parallelism shift after the work of Robert Alter and James Kugel, and what was the main difference in interpretation?

### Quiz Answer Key

1. A "superscript" is a note written above a psalm, providing background information. It gives details about the genre, author, and historical circumstances related to the psalm.
2. "Mizmor" means a song sung with musical accompaniment. This highlights the Psalms as musical compositions intended to be sung and heard with instruments.



3. Hauk-Ventura used the accent marks in the Hebrew text, suggesting they were hand signals used by musicians. She reconstructed temple music based on an E scale instead of a C scale, arguing these accents were hand signals rather than notations.
4. The four parts of Psalm 4 are: the address to God with introductory petitions, the address to the highborn apostates, the petitions themselves, and the confidence and praise to God. Each part focuses on different aspects of the psalmist's situation and his interaction with both God and his opponents.
5. The "highborn apostates" are leaders or influential people who have lost faith in the psalmist and God. The psalmist's central issue is their lack of confidence and faithfulness, and his aim is to restore their trust.
6. "Rigzu" literally means to quake or tremble, however, Waltke interprets it as trembling out of fear of the consequences of sinning, not just anger. This interpretation fits better with the psalmist's message about the dangers of turning away from God.
7. "Search your hearts and be silent" means to examine one's conscience in quiet contemplation, away from the influence of others. This introspection should confirm their faith and lead them back to the covenant community.
8. The three restrictions are parallelism, terseness, and a heightened style with concrete images and figures of speech. These restrictions focus on a different kind of literary expression than the more expansive narrative prose.
9. Parallelism involves a repetition of ideas or phrases between two or more lines. It enhances understanding by providing a stereophonic and unified message that is not just a reiteration, but an expansion of the idea.
10. Alter and Kugel argued that the second line in parallelism is not a mere restatement but rather an emphatic or added statement. They propose that each line presents related but distinct aspects of a single idea, challenging the traditional view of synonymous parallelism.

### **Essay Questions**

1. Discuss the literary and theological significance of the "superscript" in the Psalms. How does this feature contribute to the reader's understanding of individual psalms and the collection as a whole?

2. Compare and contrast Waltke's interpretation of Psalm 4 with your own reading. How does his analysis of the poem's structure and language impact your understanding of the psalmist's message and intentions?
3. Explore the implications of understanding Hebrew poetry according to the framework proposed by Kugel and Alter. How does this approach influence the way you read and interpret biblical texts compared to traditional approaches?
4. Analyze the three vignettes in Psalm 23 as presented by Waltke: the shepherd and the sheep, the sheikh and the guest, and the temple imagery. How do these scenes work together to convey the psalm's message about God's faithfulness and goodness?
5. Discuss the challenges of translating and interpreting ancient texts such as the Psalms. How do linguistic, cultural, and literary differences impact the process, and how can readers approach these texts with greater understanding?

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Superscript:** A note or title above a psalm in the Hebrew text, providing information about authorship, genre, historical context, or musical instructions.
- **Mizmor:** A Hebrew term that signifies a song, often played with musical accompaniment, and used to denote a specific genre of psalms.
- **Parallelism:** A literary technique prevalent in Hebrew poetry, wherein two or more lines express similar or contrasting ideas, enhancing and elaborating on the initial concept.
- **Synonymous Parallelism:** A type of parallelism where the parallel lines refer to the same or similar ideas, often through different wording or imagery.
- **Antithetical Parallelism:** A type of parallelism where the parallel lines express opposite ideas or contrasts to emphasize a point.
- **Synthetic Parallelism:** A type of parallelism where the second line adds to the first or develops it further, without direct synonymy or contrast.
- **Bicolon:** A pair of lines or a two-line unit in Hebrew poetry.
- **Tricolon:** A three-line unit in Hebrew poetry.
- **Hemi-stick:** A single line or half-line within a bicola.

- **Apostrophe:** A literary device where the writer addresses an absent person, idea, or object as if it were present and capable of understanding.
- **Janus:** A literary technique where a transition is made by starting one thought and then transitioning mid-sentence to a different but related idea.
- **Hesed:** A Hebrew word often translated as loving-kindness, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness, used to describe God's covenantal commitment.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God to humans.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech where a concept is referred to by the name of something closely associated with it.

## 5. FAQs on Waltke, Psalms, Session 5, Psalm 4: On Hebrew Poetry, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on the Psalms and Hebrew Poetry

1. **What is a "psalm" according to the source, and what role did music play in its performance?** A psalm, derived from the Hebrew word *mizmor*, is essentially a song meant to be sung with musical accompaniment. The text suggests that music was an integral part of these inspired and prophetic materials. The source mentions that some scholars, like Susanna Hauk-Ventura, believed the accent marks within the Hebrew text were originally hand signals used to guide musicians, suggesting a deeper connection between the written word and its musical expression. While the melodies are lost to time, it's clear that the Psalms were not meant to be simply read but performed and experienced with music.
2. **What is the significance of "superscripts" in the Psalms?** Superscripts are the headings or prose texts found above the actual poetic text of the Psalms. These superscripts provide basic historical or contextual information, including the psalm's genre, and sometimes identify the author. Crucially, in 14 out of 73 cases, the superscripts even connect a psalm to a specific incident in David's life, as described in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, allowing for a richer understanding of the psalm's origin and meaning. They act as a historical and literary guide, adding layers of context to the poetic text itself.
3. **How does the source describe the structure of Psalm 4 and its different sections?** Psalm 4 is divided into four main parts: (I) an address to God with introductory petitions, (II) an address to highborn apostates, (III) the petitions themselves, and (IV) expressions of confidence and praise to God. This structural approach shows how the psalm shifts from speaking to God, to addressing the apostates, then returning to petition and finally finding rest in God. The shift in address is considered to be literary fiction and is intended to convey the truth of the psalm in a poetic way.
4. **What are the key elements of Hebrew poetry and how does it differ from prose?** Hebrew poetry is characterized by three main elements: parallelism, terseness, and a heightened style. Unlike prose, which tells a story sequentially (like a motion picture), poetry presents ideas in short, concise statements (like a slide show). It is not patterned, metered, or rhymed like Western poetry, but structured by repetition of ideas (parallelism). It's filled with figures of speech,

concrete imagery, and poetic devices making it less clear and more open to interpretation. The text uses the example of the story of Sisera in both prose and poetic form to highlight the differences in how information is presented.

5. **What is "parallelism" in Hebrew poetry, and what are the different types according to Bishop Lowth?** Parallelism is a core feature of Hebrew poetry, where a line is followed by another, often echoing, contrasting, or adding to the first. Bishop Lowth categorized three types of parallelism: (1) *synonymous*, where the two lines refer to the same thing using different words (e.g., "rebukes" and "terrifies"); (2) *antithetical*, where the second line contrasts with the first (e.g., "the way of the righteous" versus "the way of the wicked"); and (3) *synthetic*, where the second line adds to the meaning of the first (e.g. "who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law, day and night"). This structure creates a sense of depth and richness, like hearing a message "stereophonically."
6. **How did scholars like James Kugel and Robert Alter challenge Lowth's understanding of parallelism, and what was the effect?** James Kugel and Robert Alter revolutionized the understanding of Hebrew poetry by arguing that the second line of a parallel structure is not merely a restatement or shadow of the first line, but rather an emphatic, enriching, or defining statement. The second line builds upon the first and enhances its meaning. This view rejected the idea of synonymous parallelism, because, Kugel argued, the different words will always add something new. This change shifted the focus to identifying how the second line adds to the first, creating a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of Hebrew poetry. Instead of a "swan and shadow," Kugel argued for a "goose and gander."
7. **How does understanding Hebrew poetry, with its use of parallelism, affect the way we interpret the Bible and use it in theology?** The understanding of Hebrew poetry significantly affects how we approach biblical interpretation. Because Hebrew poetry often uses figures of speech, it should not always be interpreted literally the way one would interpret prose. The use of parallelism, with its subtle distinctions in meaning, calls for a careful analysis of the two lines. For example, a parallel verse that on the surface seems synonymous may be calling our attention to different facets of a concept, and thus be very important to understand. Similarly, the text explains how understanding the literary form has helped to clarify certain prophetic interpretations.

8. **What does Psalm 23 reveal about God through the different scenes presented, and how does the psalmist's relationship with God evolve in the psalm?** Psalm 23 portrays God through three distinct scenes: as a shepherd, as a host, and ultimately, as the eternal presence in the temple. These images teach about God's goodness and faithfulness. As a shepherd, God provides, restores, and protects his sheep. As a host, he offers abundance and safety in the midst of enemies. The psalmist shifts from speaking about God in the third person to addressing God directly, in a way that evolves with the imagery. The psalm begins with the psalmist describing the Lord's care to a congregation, then shifts to addressing God directly when speaking of his own experience as a guest in the tent, and ends with another address to the congregation, sharing the vision of the Lord's eternal presence. This transition highlights the dynamic and personal nature of the relationship with God, leading to an understanding of divine provision, protection, and an eternal dwelling with Him.