

## **Waltke, Psalms, Session 12, Resources from Notebooklm**

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

### **1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 12, Hymn, Pagan Imagery, Zion, Psalm 100, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke analyzes petition psalms, a significant genre within the Psalter. He examines the structure and motifs of these psalms, including the roles of lament, the "enemy," and expressions of faith and confidence in God. Waltke contrasts his approach with that of earlier scholars like Gunkel and Mowinckel, critiquing their interpretations as overly psychological and neglecting the historical context of the psalms, particularly their connection to the Israelite monarchy. The lecture explores various life settings reflected in these psalms, such as times of illness, exile, and conflict. Ultimately, Waltke emphasizes the honest portrayal of human emotion and faith found within these psalms.

**2. 22-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 12 – 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 is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Bruce Waltke's lecture on Petition Psalms:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Petition Psalms

##### Overview:

This lecture focuses on the Petition Psalms within the book of Psalms, exploring their form, content, and theological implications. Dr. Waltke utilizes a form-critical approach, building upon the work of German scholar Hermann Gunkel while also critiquing some of his interpretations. He divides the Petition Psalms analysis into three parts: an introduction, a discussion of imprecatory psalms (prayers for God to punish enemies), and a (non-included) theology of petition psalms.

##### Main Themes and Key Ideas:

##### 1. Types of Psalms:

- Waltke identifies *four* main types of Psalms: Hymns (general praise), Grateful Praise (specific acts), Petition Psalms (laments and requests), and Instruction Psalms (exhortations to abide by God's law).
  - He notes that Petition Psalms are a dominant genre in the Psalter.
  - The first psalm in the book is presented as an instruction psalm for those who meditate on God's word.
1. *"We noted there are three principal kinds of Psalms. There are hymns, praise of God in general, grateful songs of praise, and petition Psalms...There really is another kind and that is instruction psalms."*

##### 2. Petition Psalms - Structure & Analysis:

- Waltke, following Gunkel, emphasizes the detailed analysis of the psalms, comparing it to "ripping apart a flower" to understand its components.
- He divides the analysis of Petition Psalms into individual laments, communal laments (sometimes mixing "I" with "we" which is explained through a royal interpretation that the "I" is the King), a discussion of the enemy, and motifs.
- Individual laments comprise approximately 50 out of 150 psalms in the Psalter.

## 1. Nomenclature:

- Petition Psalms can also be called "lament" or "complaint" psalms.
- The term used depends on which motif is most pronounced, e.g., lamenting sin vs protesting injustice.
- Waltke uses "Petition Psalms" as his main label.

## 1. Importance of Lament:

- Laments are central to the life of faith, reflecting the difficulties and distresses of life, and aren't a sign of deficient faith, rather they are intrinsic to faith.
- 1. *"the predominance of laments at the very heart of Israel's prayers means that the problems that give rise to lament are not something marginal or unusual, but rather are central to the life of faith."*
- The experience of anguish and puzzlement are part of the very nature of faith.
- The triumph of God in the midst of distress is central.

## 1. The Gap Between Virtue and Reward:

- Waltke asserts it's essential that there be a gap between virtue and rewards to prevent us from using God for self-gratification instead of worshipping Him for who He is.
- This gap requires us to depend upon God, especially during suffering.
- He references Deuteronomy 8 where God humbles the Israelites in the wilderness to teach dependence.
- Prosperity can lead to pride and forgetting God.
- 1. *"...the gap between virtue and its reward is essential to the spiritual life. With prayers answered immediately, the petitioner would confound pleasure with morality. We would selfishly use God..."*

## 2. Identification of the "I":

- Waltke argues, following Gunkel, that the "I" in the individual lament psalms should be interpreted as an individual, and often, as the King, not the community.
- He critiques scholars of Gunkel's time for misinterpreting the "I" as the entire community.

1. *"He writes it was the gravest mistake that some research in general could have made when they completely misunderstood such lively individual poetry and universally related the I of the complaint songs to the community."*

## 2. Life Settings:

- Petition Psalms arose from various life settings: the temple, distance from the temple (possibly captivity), sickbeds, awareness of sin, internal distress, trial settings, and situations of enemies.
- Figurative language in the Psalms makes identifying the precise setting difficult.
- Many of the settings can be understood through David's struggles with Saul and Absalom.

## 1. The Enemy:

- A significant motif is the presence of the enemy. About 47 out of 50 petition psalms mention an enemy, which is more than 30% of the Psalter.
- Enemies are described with extensive *moral* terms: evil, deceitful, violent, arrogant, shifty, and liars, indicating a spiritual war between good and evil. The psalms identify them as those who do not follow God's path.
- They are depicted as military adversaries, hunters, wild animals (lions, bulls, dogs), and those with crooked ways.

## 1. Mowinckel and Gunkel's Misinterpretations:

- Waltke critiques the interpretations of scholars Sigmund Mowinckel and Hermann Gunkel.
- Mowinckel interprets the enemies as magicians casting spells.
- Gunkel views the psalmist as emotionally unstable, with "primitive feelings," suggesting the enemies are not literal, but a manifestation of the psalmist's psychological struggles (paranoia). He argues that the psalms were originally royal but were later adopted metaphorically for the common citizen. In Gunkel's view, common citizens are sick and the psalms are a metaphor of their illness. Gunkel also concludes the conflict in the psalms is due to class warfare with the pious (poor) fighting against the rich.
- Waltke strongly disagrees with these interpretations because Gunkel and Mowinckel fail to understand how important it is that the psalms were initially

composed by the king. He believes that their interpretations are colored by their pre-understandings and Higher Criticism of the Old Testament, leading them to misread the text.

- *"This is scholarship so-called."*

#### 1. **Motifs of Petition Psalms:**

- Waltke identifies five key motifs:
- **Address:** Summons to God (introduction)
- **Lament/Complaint:** Expression of distress and pain, often including feelings of God's absence, the enemy's strength, and a sense of being near death.
- **Petition:** The request to God to intervene as the judge, often involving calls for delivery, rescue, and justice. Prayers can also include pleas for forgiveness (confessional) or assertions of innocence (protest).
- **Confidence:** Expression of trust and faith in God, based on His character, past actions, and the Psalmist's own identity as the King, a child of God, or the chosen people.
- **Conclusion:** Often characterized by absolute certainty that God has answered. This assurance comes from a "metamorphosis" in faith.

#### 1. **Petition for Deliverance:**

- The petition often asks God for delivery which includes the notions of military and juridical intervention and is right because it is just. The petitioner cries out for justice because the responsibility for justice is on God, I Am. If God does not help the innocent sufferer then the afflicted is put to shame.

#### 1. **Confessional and Protest Petitions:**

- Confessional petitions are when the psalmist petitions God to forgive their sins.
- Protest petitions are when the psalmist feels innocent of wrongdoing and asks God to deliver them because of this.
- The psalmist petitions God to not allow the innocent to fall to the fate of sinners.

#### 1. **The Conclusion:**

- The conclusion to a Petition Psalm is often one of absolute certainty. The reasons for this are that there are priestly oracles, the psychology of faith, that the prayer has transformed the heart.
- Dr. Waltke disagrees that the psalmist must pray through until they receive certainty because he does not believe that this is true of all the psalms.

### **Key Quotes:**

- *"It's here that I discuss this notion that we discussed yesterday, that it is absolutely essential that there is a gap between virtue and its rewards. For if God rewarded our virtue immediately, we would use God."*
- *"So, the difficulties and distresses of life are at the heart of our faith. It's the triumph of God in our distress."*
- *"And when we get to the New Testament, it makes it even clearer. We're wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers."*

### **Implications:**

Dr. Waltke's lecture provides a detailed framework for understanding the Petition Psalms, highlighting their theological significance and practical application for believers facing trials. The emphasis on a relationship with God that transcends life's struggles, a spiritual war, a battle of good and evil, is a central takeaway for readers.

### **Areas for Further Consideration (based on the lecture):**

- The imprecatory psalms and their relationship to New Testament teachings (addressed in Part 2 of the lecture, not included in this excerpt).
- The theology of Petition Psalms (to be addressed in a section not present in this excerpt).
- The nature of "certainty" in the conclusions of the psalms and whether it's present in every psalm.

This briefing document serves as a comprehensive summary of the core arguments and information presented in the provided lecture excerpts.

## 4. Psalms Study Guide: Waltke, Psalms, Session 12, Petition Psalms, Lament, Enemy Motifs

### Psalms Study Guide: Petition Psalms, Lament, Enemy, and Motifs

#### Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Waltke, what are the four principal kinds of psalms?
2. What is the primary focus of petition psalms?
3. What are "imprecatory psalms," and why are they problematic for some?
4. What are the five elements that can be found in a typical petition psalm?
5. What is the significance of the "gap" between virtue and its rewards?
6. How did Gunkel interpret the "I" in the individual lament psalms, and what was his mistake?
7. Name three common settings in which individual lament psalms may have originated?
8. In what ways are the enemies described in petition psalms?
9. How did Mowinckel and Gunkel interpret the concept of the enemy in the psalms, and how does it differ from a literal interpretation?
10. What are the four motifs of the petition psalm, and in what order would Waltke prefer them to be?

#### Answer Key

1. The four principal kinds of psalms are hymns (general praise), grateful praise (for specific acts), petition psalms, and instruction psalms (exhortations to abide in the law of the Lord).
2. Petition psalms primarily focus on expressing distress, lament, and appeals to God for help, intervention, and justice. They are prayers of need and dependence on God.
3. Imprecatory psalms are those in which the psalmist prays for God to punish their enemies. These are problematic because they seem inconsistent with New Testament teachings about loving one's enemies.

4. The five elements are an address to God, a lament or complaint, a petition or request, confidence in God, and a conclusion that often includes praise. These are not in any necessary order, but form the structure of many petition psalms.
5. The "gap" between virtue and its rewards prevents us from using God for self-gratification; we would worship him for what he does, and not for who he is. It forces us to rely on God, developing character and faith.
6. Gunkel originally argued that the "I" was not an individual but the community collectively. He later recognized it as an individual, but he failed to grasp that it was often the king.
7. Three settings include: composed for or at the temple, composed at a distance from the temple, during a life and death crisis, or when sick. Also, they can be the result of sin or be a result of internal distress.
8. The enemies are described in moral terms such as evil, arrogant, and deceitful and described in physical ways that include military terms, hunters, and as wild animals. They are also depicted as opposed to God.
9. Mowinckel saw the enemies as magicians casting spells, while Gunkel viewed them as metaphors arising from the psalmist's mental illness and paranoia. Both interpretations depart from a literal understanding.
10. The four motifs of petition psalms are the address, lament, petition, and confidence. Waltke prefers them ordered as: address, lament, confidence, petition, and conclusion.

### **Essay Questions**

1. Discuss the significance of the petition psalms within the overall book of Psalms. How do these psalms reflect the relationship between the believer and God? Use specific examples from the lecture to support your analysis.
2. Compare and contrast Gunkel's view of the enemies in the petition psalms with the historical understanding of the psalms, citing the issues with Gunkel's view and what issues may be driving those interpretations.
3. Analyze the elements of lament and confidence as they appear in petition psalms. How do these elements demonstrate the Psalmist's struggle and their ultimate faith in God?



4. Examine the role of the "enemy" in the petition psalms, and discuss the varying ways the enemy is described. How does the way the enemy is described impact our understanding of the petition psalm?
5. Explore the different "life settings" from which petition psalms are thought to have originated, and discuss how these different settings shaped the content and tone of the psalms. Give specific examples from the text to support your ideas.

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Hymns:** Psalms that are general praises of God.
- **Grateful Praise Psalms:** Psalms expressing thanks for specific acts or blessings from God.
- **Petition Psalms:** Psalms that express distress, lament, and appeals for God's help and intervention. Also called "laments" or "complaint psalms."
- **Instruction Psalms:** Psalms that exhort to abide in the law of the Lord.
- **Form Criticism:** A method of studying biblical texts that focuses on analyzing their literary form and genre.
- **Imprecatory Psalms:** Petition psalms that call for judgment, vengeance, or punishment upon enemies.
- **Motif:** A recurring element or idea within a literary work.
- **Address:** The opening of a psalm that calls upon or invokes God.
- **Lament:** An expression of sorrow, grief, or complaint found in petition psalms. Also called "complaint".
- **Petition:** The request or appeal to God for help, deliverance, or justice.
- **Confidence:** A declaration of faith and trust in God's power and faithfulness. This often follows the lament and proceeds the specific petition.
- **Conclusion:** The final section of a petition psalm, often expressing assurance of God's response or praise.
- **Nomenclature:** The system of names or terms used in a particular field of study.
- **Life Setting:** The historical, social, or personal context in which a biblical text originated.

- **Penitential Psalms:** Psalms expressing remorse and confession of sins.
- **Protest Psalms:** Psalms that express innocence of wrongdoing and call upon God for vindication.
- **Royal Interpretation:** The understanding that the "I" in many psalms refers to the king.
- **Zoomorphic Imagery:** The use of animal imagery to describe people, objects, or situations.
- **Hermeneutics:** The theory and methodology of interpreting texts, especially biblical texts.

## 5. FAQ on Themes from Dr. Bruce Waltke's Psalms Lecture

### FAQ on the Petition Psalms

1. **What are the main types of Psalms according to Dr. Waltke, and how do Petition Psalms fit into this classification?** Dr. Waltke identifies four main types of Psalms: hymns (general praise of God), grateful songs of praise (for specific acts), petition Psalms (requests for help), and instruction Psalms (exhortations to abide by the law of the Lord). Petition Psalms are the dominant sound within the Psalter and are characterized by laments, complaints, and pleas for divine intervention.
2. **What are the key elements or motifs found in Petition Psalms?** Petition Psalms typically include an address to God, a lament or complaint, a petition or request for help, an expression of confidence in God, and a concluding statement of assurance or praise. These elements are not always in a fixed order, but they are common components of this genre. It's also common to see the enemy mentioned as part of the life setting of the psalm.
3. **What is the significance of the "I" in the individual lament psalms?** The "I" in these psalms refers to an actual individual, often the king or a person in distress. This is contrary to some older scholarship that tried to interpret the "I" as referring to the entire community. The individual is experiencing real personal struggles.
4. **What are some of the "life settings" or situations in which these Psalms were composed?** Petition Psalms arose from a variety of life settings, including times of sickness, persecution by enemies, periods of personal sin and guilt, and general distress. Some psalms were composed in the temple, while others were composed far from the sanctuary, such as in exile.
5. **How are enemies depicted in Petition Psalms, and what is their significance?** Enemies are portrayed using various terms, often with moral connotations such as "evil doers," "liars," and "violent men." They are also depicted through different images, such as an army, hunters, or animals. Importantly, these enemies are not merely physical foes, but are presented as embodying a spiritual war between good and evil and a part of the context of spiritual warfare.
6. **What problem arises from some of the Petition Psalms, and how can they be understood?** Some Petition Psalms include imprecatory prayers, where the psalmist calls for God to punish their enemies, and even seems to call for violence against them. These are difficult for many Christians to reconcile with New

Testament teachings of love and forgiveness. These prayers can be understood in the context of the Old Testament's emphasis on God's justice and the role of the king as God's representative to establish justice on earth. They also should be interpreted as lamentations, recognizing that even protest against injustice is a valid element of faith.

7. **Why is the gap between virtue and reward important, according to the speaker?**

The speaker suggests that a gap between virtue and its immediate reward is essential for spiritual development. If God immediately rewarded good behavior, it could lead to self-serving worship of God and not true worship of who he is. This "gap" forces dependence upon God rather than dependence on our own actions. It allows suffering to build endurance and character which ultimately leads to hope.

8. **What is the relationship between lament, confidence, and faith within the Petition Psalms?** The Petition Psalms emphasize the importance of honest lament and complaints in the life of faith while also maintaining confidence in God's character and actions. The lamenting is not to be done in a posture of disbelief, but of ultimate trust in God and knowing that He is doing a good work in the midst of the trouble. Even when the psalmist feels forsaken, the underlying confidence in God, based on His character, past actions, and the psalmist's understanding of his election, enables the petitioners to conclude with praise and hope. The act of faith is critical to this process of lament leading to confidence.