

Waltke, Psalms, Session 28, Resources from Notebooklm

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

1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, 28, Editing of the Psalter, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke examines the editing of the Book of Psalms, exploring its structure and compilation. He discusses the book's various titles, tracing its development from individual psalms collected into groups and ultimately five books. Waltke analyzes different methods of grouping the Psalms, including by author, genre, and the use of God's names (Yahweh vs. Elohim), highlighting the "Elohistic Psalter" as a particularly complex example. Finally, he considers the significance of the book's final form within the biblical canon, emphasizing its focus on the king and its ultimate messianic implications.

2. 20-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 28 – 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).



Waltke_Psalms_Session28_Editing_Psalter.mj

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture transcript by Dr. Bruce Waltke on the editing of the Psalter (the Book of Psalms):

Briefing Document: The Editing of the Psalter

Source: Excerpts from "Waltke_Psalms_EN_Lecture28.pdf"

Overview: This lecture focuses on how the Book of Psalms was compiled and structured. Dr. Waltke examines the titles, the process of collection, the various ways the psalms were grouped, the five-book structure, and the significance of the final canonical form. The lecture draws heavily on the work of scholars like Gerard Wilson and Joel Burnett.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Titles of the Psalms:

- **Hebrew:** In the Hebrew Bible, the book itself has no specific title, unlike other books named after their opening words. Psalm 72 might suggest an earlier collection called "the prayers of David."
- **Rabbinic:** The book is known as *Sefer Tehillim*, meaning "Book of Praises" or simply *Tehillim* ("Praises"), reflecting its content.
- **Septuagint:** Codex Vaticanus: *Psalmoi* (Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *mizmor*, meaning a song with a stringed instrument).
- Codex Alexandrinus: *Psalterion* (leading to the term "Psalter").
- **Latin:** Jerome's translation, *Liber Psalmorum* ("Book of Psalms"), derived from the Greek *Psalmoi*.
- **Meaning of "Psalm":** While originally denoting a song with stringed accompaniment (*mizmor*), it has come to connote a sacred song or hymn of praise. As Waltke states: "Strictly speaking, as we saw Psalms or mizmor meant a song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument. But since the note of praise is so strong in the book that Psalm now it denotes a song sung to the stringed instrument, the note of praise is so strong that Psalm connotes a song of praise."

1. Process of Collection:

- **Stage 1: Individual Psalms:** Composed for the temple (hymns, songs of praise) or outside the temple (laments, often attributed to David, especially during his time with Saul in the wilderness.)
- **Stage 2: Adoption for Temple Use:** Psalms (even laments) were given to the chief musician for use in temple worship, thus being "democratized" for the people (or priests or king). Likely were performed antiphonally, with various voices, possibly including the voice of God through a prophet or priest.
- **Stage 3: Grouping: By Author:** David (most numerous), the sons of Korah, Asaph, and Moses. "The Chronicler mentions two authors. He talks about David and he talks about Asaph as being two principal authors of the Psalms."
- **By Genre:** *Miktam*, *Maskil*, etc.
- **Elohistic Psalter:** A significant collection (Psalms 42-83) that primarily uses *Elohim* (generic term for God, God's transcendence) instead of *Yahweh* (personal name of God, God's covenant relationship with Israel). Waltke highlights, "In the Elohistic Psalter, the primary name is Elohim. This refers to God in his transcendence... in the Elohistic Psalter, Elohim is in the A verse set and Yahweh is in the B verse set."
- **Significance of 42:** This collection contains 42 psalms. The number 42 is associated with premature judgment or death in the Old Testament. This may relate to the destruction of the temple in 587 BC. Waltke notes, "the number 42 refers to premature judgment."
- **Lament and Hope:** The Elohistic Psalter expresses lament for destruction and exile, but also hope for renewal. The collection surrounds a Davidic core (51-72) with Levitical collections (Korahites: 42-49 and Asaph: 73-83).
- **Thematic Groupings:** Morning/Evening prayers; shared metaphors/imagery; enthronement psalms (Psalms 93-99).
- **Juxtaposition:** Similar beginnings/endings, unique titles (Song of Ascents), catchphrases, concatenation.
- **Hallelujah Psalms:** Conclude Psalter segments.

- **Stage 4: Collection into Five Books:** Each book concludes with a doxology, with some variation between them. Book 5 is an exception, with five psalms of praise (146-150). Waltke notes, "The evidence that there's a five-book arrangement is that it's seemingly that these Psalms that ended with doxologies ended the book, but they're not boilerplate. Each doxology is different."
- The rabbis recognized these five books and connected them with the five books of the Law given by Moses, as indicated by the quote "As Moses gave the five books of the law to Israel, so David gave the five books of Psalms to Israel."
- Book divisions also marked by changes in authorship and named by their first words.

1. **The Five Books:**

- **Book 1:** Psalms 1-41. Primarily authored by David.
- **Book 2:** Psalms 42-72. Begins with the sons of Korah and contains a Davidic core. Ends with a mention that the prayers of David are ended.
- **Book 3:** Psalms 73-89. Begins with Asaph and contains the darkest material in the Psalter, including laments and the failure of the Davidic Covenant.
- **Book 4:** Psalms 90-106. Attributed to Moses and focuses on God's transcendence. The book begins in the context of the failure of the Davidic covenant and goes back to Moses and the foundational relationship between God and Israel. "Moses was only mentioned once in Psalms, in books one through three... In book four, he's mentioned seven times."
- **Book 5:** Psalms 107-150. Begins with a return from exile. Also contains messianic psalms.

1. **Significance of Shaping the Canon:**

- **One Ordering Mind:** An editor likely gave the book its final form, including the introduction (Psalms 1-2) and conclusion (last five psalms). As Waltke notes, "the collection bears the impress of one ordering mind."
- **Shift from Temple to Synagogue:** The Psalms, originally the king's and people's words to God (temple use), became the word of God to the community of faith (synagogue use, meditation). "The priestly editors transformed the Psalms used in temple liturgy to reflective meditation in the synagogue."

- **Focus on the King:** The book is structured around the idea of the king, starting with Psalm 2 (a coronation liturgy) and progressing to the universal rule of the king in Psalm 72. Book 3 shows the failure of the Davidic covenant and Book 4 goes back to God's power through Moses and Book 5 picks up on the redemption from exile. Waltke argues that “the book is arranged around the king. And so, Psalms 2 and 72 are all about the king.”
- **Eschatological and Messianic Hope:** The combination of death and life, judgment and hope in the Psalter gives it an eschatological and messianic perspective. The king represents the messianic hope.

1. Qumran Scrolls:

- The Qumran scroll 11QPs contains eight more psalms and different arrangements.
- There is debate on whether the Qumran community had a different canon than the Masoretic text. Some view it as a liturgical text while others view it as evidence for a different canon.

Key Quotes:

- “Strictly speaking, as we saw Psalms or mizmor meant a song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument. But since the note of praise is so strong in the book that Psalm now it denotes a song sung to the stringed instrument, the note of praise is so strong that Psalm connotes a song of praise.”
- "The Chronicler mentions two authors. He talks about David and he talks about Asaph as being two principal authors of the Psalms."
- “In the Elohist Psalter, the primary name is Elohim. This refers to God in his transcendence... in the Elohist Psalter, Elohim is in the A verse set and Yahweh is in the B verse set.”
- "the number 42 refers to premature judgment."
- "The evidence that there's a five-book arrangement is that it's seemingly that these Psalms that ended with doxologies ended the book, but they're not boilerplate. Each doxology is different."
- “As Moses gave the five books of the law to Israel, so David gave the five books of Psalms to Israel.”
- “the collection bears the impress of one ordering mind.”

- “The priestly editors transformed the Psalms used in temple liturgy to reflective meditation in the synagogue.”
- “the book is arranged around the king. And so, Psalms 2 and 72 are all about the king.”
- “Moses was only mentioned once in Psalms, in books one through three... In book four, he's mentioned seven times.”

Conclusion:

Dr. Waltke's lecture emphasizes that the Book of Psalms is not simply a collection of individual poems, but a carefully edited and structured work. The organization of the Psalms into five books, the use of different divine names, thematic groupings, and overall focus on the figure of the king reveal a deliberate purpose and deeper meaning within the Psalter. The final form of the Psalter transforms it from a collection of songs for the temple into a book of reflective meditation, where the people's response is not just to the deeds of God but also to the words of God. The inclusion of lament with hope offers a messianic perspective.

4. Psalms Study Guide: Session 28, Editing of the Psalter

Psalms Study Guide: Editing of the Psalter

Short Answer Quiz

1. What are the two main titles for the book of Psalms, and what is the origin of each?
2. What are the five stages of the formation of the Psalter, according to the lecture?
3. What are the primary names used for God within the Elohist Psalter, and what does each name emphasize about God?
4. What is the symbolic significance of the number 42, and how is it related to the Elohist Psalter?
5. How are the Psalms grouped thematically? Give an example of one of these groupings.
6. How are Psalms 1 and 2 related and what is their function in the Psalter?
7. What are the five books of the Psalter, and how are they demarcated?
8. What are some of the key points of contrast between the first three books and books four and five of the Psalter?
9. What does the lecture suggest about the role of the king in the overall structure and message of the Psalter?
10. How did the final editing of the Psalms impact their purpose and usage within the community of faith?

Short Answer Quiz - Answer Key

1. The two main titles are "Tehillim," meaning "praises" derived from the content of the book, and "Psalms," derived from the Greek word "Psalmoi", a translation of the Hebrew "mizmor," which referred to songs sung with stringed instruments.
2. The five stages are: individual psalms, adoption and use in the temple, collection into groups, collection into five books, and finally the canonization of the text.
3. The primary names used are "Elohim," which emphasizes God's transcendence and universal power, and "Yahweh," which emphasizes God's personal relationship with Israel as the covenant God who makes himself known through his relationship with Israel.

4. The number 42 symbolizes premature judgment and death and in the Elohistic Psalter it may reflect lament over the destruction of the temple.
5. Psalms are grouped thematically through related images, metaphors, and content as with the example of the morning and evening prayers of Psalms 3, 4, 5, and 6 or Psalms 7, 8, and 9.
6. Psalms 1 and 2 are related as an introduction, with Psalm 1 referencing Torah and wisdom and Psalm 2 being a coronation liturgy for the king; together, they provide an initial framing for the entire Psalter.
7. The five books of the Psalter are: Book 1 (Psalms 1-41), Book 2 (Psalms 42-72), Book 3 (Psalms 73-89), Book 4 (Psalms 90-106), and Book 5 (Psalms 107-150). These books are demarcated by different doxologies and a change of authorship at the beginning of each book.
8. Books one through three seem to have been formed earlier than four and five, with book one primarily being from David, and books four and five featuring Moses. There is a contrast with books one and three emphasizing David and the Kingship and books four and five emphasizing Moses and God's eternal reign.
9. The lecture suggests that the book is structured around the figure of the king, with themes and prayers related to the king's coronation, his prayers, and the scope of his rule. The lectures also notes that the failure of the Davidic covenant is addressed before being transcended in Books Four and Five.
10. The final editing transformed the Psalms from temple liturgy to a form of reflective meditation in the synagogue, meaning they became the words of God to the community of faith, rather than just the words of the people to God.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the different ways the Psalms were grouped during the formation of the Psalter, explaining the significance of each method. How did these groupings contribute to the final form and message of the Psalter?
2. Analyze the role of the Elohistic Psalter within the larger structure of the book of Psalms. What does the concentration of the divine name Elohim reveal about the purpose and content of these specific psalms?
3. Trace the role of the king as a central theme throughout the five books of the Psalter. How does the focus on the king change across the different sections, and

what does this suggest about the development of Israel's understanding of kingship and their relationship with God?

4. Compare and contrast the thematic content and message of Book 3 and Book 4 of the Psalter. How do these books contribute to the broader narrative and theological claims of the overall book of Psalms?
5. Evaluate the significance of the final editing of the Psalter in shaping its use within the Jewish and Christian traditions. How did the transition from temple liturgy to synagogue meditation change the way the Psalms were read and understood?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Psalter:** Another name for the book of Psalms, derived from the Greek term "Psalterion."
- **Mizmor:** The Hebrew word meaning "psalm," a song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument.
- **Tehillim:** The Hebrew title for the book of Psalms, meaning "praises."
- **Elohistic Psalter:** A collection of 42 psalms (Psalms 42-83) within the Psalter characterized by a high frequency of the divine name "Elohim" instead of "Yahweh."
- **Elohim:** A Hebrew name for God emphasizing transcendence and power as creator.
- **Yahweh:** The personal name of God revealed to Israel emphasizing His covenant relationship with them.
- **Doxology:** A liturgical expression of praise to God, often used to conclude a psalm or a book within the Psalter.
- **Antiphonal:** A style of singing in which two or more groups alternate in singing or chanting.
- **Canon:** The list of books considered authoritative scripture by a religious community.
- **Masoretic Text:** The authoritative Hebrew text of the Old Testament developed by Jewish scribes from the 7th to 10th centuries.
- **Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

- **Qumran:** An ancient site where a community of Essenes lived who produced numerous ancient scrolls, including some containing Psalms.
- **Concatenation:** A method of grouping material through the use of catchphrases or words that link different passages together.
- **Enthronement Psalms:** Psalms that focus on God's reign and kingship over all the earth.
- **Hallelujah Psalms:** Psalms that begin or end with the phrase "Hallelujah" which means "Praise the Lord."
- **Songs of Ascent:** A collection of psalms (Psalms 120-134) traditionally used for pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
- **Michtam:** A specific literary type of psalm, the meaning of which is uncertain.
- **Maskil:** A type of psalm indicating a didactic or reflective purpose, or a psalm that makes one prudent or skillful.
- **Inclusio:** A literary device where a passage begins and ends with the same or a similar phrase or word.
- **Chironomy:** The art of directing music with hand signals.

5. FAQ on Themes from Dr. Bruce Waltke's Psalms, Session 28, Editing of the Psalter

Frequently Asked Questions about the Book of Psalms

1. **What are the different names used for the Book of Psalms, and what do they mean?**
2. The Book of Psalms is known by several names, reflecting its diverse origins and translations. In Hebrew, it is called *Tehillim*, meaning "praises," a title that emphasizes the book's content of hymns and songs of worship. The Greek Septuagint refers to it as *Psalmoi*, derived from the Hebrew word *mizmor*, denoting a song accompanied by a stringed instrument. This Greek term was the basis for the English name "Psalms." Another Greek term, *Psalterion*, is the origin of the term "Psalter." Therefore, while "Psalms" is rooted in the way they were performed, "Psalter" became a common name for the book as a whole. In Latin, Jerome called it *Liber Psalmorum*, also referencing the Greek "Psalmoi". In short, the book is named *Tehillim* because of its emphasis on praise, *Psalms* based on the Greek translation, and *Psalter* as a derivation of another Greek term.
3. **How was the Book of Psalms formed, and what were the different stages of its collection?**
4. The formation of the Book of Psalms was a multi-stage process. It began with individual psalms, some written for temple worship and others, like David's laments, composed in various personal situations. These individual psalms were then handed over to the chief musicians for use in temple worship. Over time, these psalms were collected into groups, initially by author (e.g., David, Asaph, sons of Korah), genre (e.g., *miktam*, *maskil*), or thematic grouping. A significant grouping is the "Elohistic Psalter" (Psalms 42-83), characterized by the predominant use of the divine name *Elohim* instead of *Yahweh*. Finally, these collections were organized into five distinct books, which eventually made up the canonical Book of Psalms. The process can be viewed as analogous to how small streams converge into larger rivers, culminating in the sea.

5. **What is the significance of the "Elohistic Psalter," and why is it named that way?**
6. The "Elohistic Psalter" refers to Psalms 42 through 83. It's distinct because it primarily uses the name *Elohim* for God, which refers to God's transcendence and generic deity, rather than *Yahweh* which refers to the personal covenant God of Israel. Outside of the Elohistic Psalter, the name *Yahweh* is much more common, often occurring in the "A" line of parallelism. However, in the Elohistic Psalter, the order shifts, with *Elohim* in the A line and *Yahweh* in the B line. The change is intentional and unique to this grouping of psalms. It is also noteworthy that the Elohistic collection is made of 42 Psalms, and this number is symbolically significant as relating to death and premature judgement, and may be related to the exile. This collection is centered on a Davidic core (Psalms 51-72) flanked by two Levitical collections (Korahites, Asaph).
7. **How are the Psalms grouped together besides authorship and genre?**
8. Besides author and genre, Psalms are also grouped by theme and by catchphrases (concatenation). Thematic groupings include alternations of morning and evening prayers, as seen in Psalms 3-6. Psalms are also grouped through the use of similar phrases, shared metaphors, or images. Examples of this are found in Psalms 7-9, or Psalms 103-104. The Psalms are linked together using catchphrases or repeated words or similar endings in the manner the Semitic languages do (l, k in the alphabet are hand and palm, respectively).
9. **Why is the Book of Psalms divided into five books, and what is the evidence for this division?**
10. The Book of Psalms is divided into five books, mirroring the five books of the Pentateuch. This division is evidenced by the presence of doxologies (specific types of praise statements) at the end of each of the first four books (Psalms 41, 72, 89, and 106) each with their own unique language, each one ending with the people's response of "Amen and Amen." Additionally, there are apparent shifts in authorship at the seams of these books, such as the beginning of Book 2 with the sons of Korah after book 1 by David. The five books are also referred to by unique opening words in Rabbinic traditions. This five-book structure seems intentional and was recognized in Jewish traditions, with some seeing a parallel between Moses and David.

11. How is the king, particularly David, a central theme in the Book of Psalms?

12. The figure of the king, especially David, plays a crucial role in the book of Psalms.

The book opens with Psalm 2, a coronation liturgy, presenting the king as the figure through whom God's kingdom is expressed on earth. Book one (Psalms 1-41) is almost entirely about David in prayer. This theme of the king's rule culminates in Psalm 72, which expands on the universal rule of the king. Even within the Elohistic Psalter, a Davidic core is preserved with Psalms 51-72, and it is surrounded by Psalms attributed to the Levitical choirs of Asaph and the Korahites. This royal emphasis continues through Book 3, which contains psalms lamenting the failure of the Davidic covenant. However, the emphasis shifts in Book 4 to focus on God's sovereignty and the promise of gathering the scattered people of Israel. Book 5 starts off with the gathering of Israel from the nations, and then introduces the Messiah who is king in Psalm 110. In short, the Psalms start with the king and always point to the messianic king.

13. What is the significance of the inclusion of both lament and praise in the Psalms?

14. The book of Psalms is a mix of lament and praise, a characteristic that seems intentional. While many psalms express deep grief, disappointment, and frustration, they often include elements of praise, trust, and hope. In other words, lament and praise are always intertwined. The psalms of lament often move to praise and vow of praise. Even the darkest Psalms often have a hopeful note that is expressed in praise. This dynamic mirrors the experience of the faithful, showing that even in the most difficult times, God's presence and faithfulness remain. The combination of death and life, judgment and hope, gives the book a messianic and eschatological significance.

15. How does the final form of the Book of Psalms contribute to its meaning and purpose?

16. The final arrangement of the Psalms, under what appears to be an editorial mind, transforms individual expressions of prayer into a unified message from God to his people. The movement from the king's expressions in books one, two, and three, to focusing on God's sovereignty in books four and five highlights how God's character remains true and steadfast even when the kingdom of David fails. Book 4 reintroduces Moses as the founder of the nation, and in book 5, it is God's gathering that is the central theme. The book moves from the king in distress to the hope of the messianic king, all the while pointing to the wordy, mighty works of God. This final form creates a canon of Scripture meant for reflective meditation, study, and preaching within the community of faith, making God's words accessible for the congregation.