

## Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT History, Lit. and Theology, Lecture 22

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*Let's pray. Father, we address you this morning. We are thankful to be your children. We are thankful for the love and forbearance and the faithfulness and the protection that you give us as your children. So, as we enter another week together, Lord, we would pray that you would be by your spirit and your word working in our lives. Thank you for your presence and may it be a presence that we are aware of and responsive to. Father, we do pray for one another as we prepare for Wednesday and for the exam. And Lord, we would earnestly pray that the things that we learn together will be things that you would use to shape us and people who are lights and beacons in a dark world. As we study the Psalms together today, Lord, help us to appreciate yet another of your revelation to us and our ways of expressing our joy, our hopes, our fears, and our anxiety and anguish to you. So, we thank you for these as well. Bless this time, we pray in Christ's name with thanksgiving. Amen.*

We are indeed going to pick up, in general, poetic literature. I am going to give you some principles for understanding and reading poetry at large. And then, we are going to do the Psalms for the rest of the hour today. Of course, the reason for this is we've just been studying David. And although David hasn't written all the Psalms, according to the Psalms titles, I will say more about this in a moment, he did write about half of them, more than seventy. So, this is a good time to take a break with trying to deal with names, and events, and now is just the nice time to take a different kind of perspective and look at the Psalms themselves.

As I said a moment ago, we do have David as a significant author. When you read these Psalm titles, very often, they will say, "of David." And then go on and perhaps describes circumstances and some music notes. So how much poetry is in the Old Testament? Anybody want to guess? Half? Quarter? Two-thirds? Et cetera? Yeah, it is

about a third which is interesting. Isn't it? If we are going to think of that whole body of literature that we've got and what we are calling the First Testament, a third of it is poetic expression. I am sure that some of you like poetry but probably you and I aren't used to having a third of what you take in on a daily basis or a weekly basis be poetry because that is just not the way we express ourselves anymore but it was then. And there are some characteristics of poetry and especially, Hebrew poetry that make it just a wonderful and wonderful conduit for God's conveying his truth to people.

For that reason, we need to spend a little time talking about what Hebrew poetry is all about. But, let's do a little question first. Why is there poetry? Think of your poetry that you like even in our culture which has some differences between it and Hebrew poetry. Why is poetry such a great way to express what you want to express from God's perspective to express truth? The enjoyment of words, particularly the choices of words in poetry. Usually in Hebrew poetry, you have fewer words and yet they are very carefully chosen, aren't they? So, you raised an issue here. Suzanna has said, "specific word choices" and you are saying, I think, "ambiguous or potentially ambiguous expression so that people would have to ask the meaning of it." Both of those might work quite nicely. We will do more on that, I hope. Yeah, using very sometimes visual imagery, right? Do you get this truth across? Therefore, we are going to relate to them in particular way because of this kind of imagery that shows up and that goes right along with what's been said already. Often times, words that are used to express truth and poetry is unusual and they are going to draw on some pictures that we normally might not pick up on.

Anything else? What makes it easier to memorize? Okay, but what about the poetry that makes it easier to memorize? I am sorry I said the question wrong way. Okay, that's certainly true in western poetry, isn't it? The rhythms really help us to figure out what words went in there. Yes, the parallelism that we are going to talk about in a moment is going to be the major factor in terms of conveying truth. I would suggest

memorizing it although sometimes when we try to memorize, Psalms, for example, or Proverbs, I get a little mixed up in terms of order of things because sometimes the same thought is being expressed in different words. And you are thinking, “Okay, that comes first or the other thing comes first.” But you are right; the parallelism is going to be big deal here. The visually imagery and we are going to talk more about it with a couple of illustrations in a moment. When you have, “mountains smoking and animals leaping” and those kinds of things, they are memorable and they make impressions on us as well. So, they raise a level of sensitivity, the spiritual truth; we will see some illustrations of these as we look at some examples of Psalms, particularly. And then, it is easier to memorize than the historical narratives. Try memorizing historical narratives sometimes is a little bit difficult. But when we draw on poetry, it comes a little more easily and it doesn’t necessarily have to have the rhymes and rhythms although they certainly help as we are going to see in a moment.

Here is an example, “When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died. My riches gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.” I would suggest you. And of course, one stanza out of very beloved half. But just think about for a moment. We will talk about the rhyme and rhythm a little later on. But look at the imagery. “Survey” is a different word than “look at.” There is something imbedded in “survey” that gives us you are getting the whole look at it if you will. That’s part of implicit meaning of “survey.” And then, “cross” isn’t just “cross” but it is “wondrous.” Fortunately, this doesn’t say “awesome” because we have abused the word in the last fifteen years. It’s terrible and it doesn’t have the meaning that it should have. But “wondrous” still does. There’s something that’s beyond when we use the term, ‘wondrous.’ And then, of course, instead of simply saying, “Jesus,” although that would be perfectly appropriate, “Prince of Glory” and all the real meaning that is implicated in “glory.” “Glory” is a visible manifestation of God’s radiance, his absolute radiance. So, when you think of “glory,” then, you are thinking of that and here, Jesus as “Prince of

Glory.” And then, of course, “my richest gain,” that encompasses anything you and I might think of as the utmost of our human, generally, very self-centered aspirations. And this Paul says, “Those are nothing. They are trash and garbage. I count but lost.” And then, I like the last line, “pouring contempt.” What a wonderful way of saying. I’ve got to auto-reverse the way I have been thinking about my life. Instead of being self-serving and self-striving, I just need to “pour contempt,” overwhelmed with those senses that we have of God’s radiance and glory, my own prideful aspirations. A wonderful stanza, don’t you think? Giving us a little bit of sense in poetic form of some very profound theology, very profound theology. And then, here’s the other thing it has rhyme and rhythm to it. Now, that’s one thing that we are not going to see when we move into Hebrew poetry. There is a light sense of rhythm and there are sounds that are used, not necessarily rhyming so often. There is a use of sounds of Hebrew poetry but not to the extent that we use it in classic western poetry.

So, let’s look at some of the characteristics, we have, of Hebrew poetry. Again, I am thinking at large, at this point so that we are going to apply it not on the Psalms but we are going to apply these ideas on Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, part of it, Job, and et cetera. It’s a matter of fact, found in much of the prophetic literature too. I’ve already suggested the contrast with classic western poetry because Hebrew poetry does not have the pretty evident rhyme and rhythm. Instead, it has, what’s absolutely marvelous in terms of translation, its structure is based on a balance, almost conceptual rhythm, if you will, as opposed to sound rhythm. This is conceptual rhythm is so balanced and imagery and ideas that brings up what Zach has said in terms of our profound and important concept of parallelism. Now, when we are talking about parallelisms, no matter which kind we are going to talk about, we will look at some illustrations of these in a moment. So, see if you can listen and write at the same time. Whatever shows up in the first line is going to be re-addressed in the second line. It might be restated with synonyms which is synonymous parallelism. It might be addressed in terms of “oh, here’s one line, but here’s the

antithesis of it. Here is another way for us to think about from the opposite side.” Or it may simply say, “here’s our first statement. Let’s build on that a little bit and then build on it a little bit more and then build on it a little bit more,” which is as you can see, I have just given those three definitions or descriptions of those three. Let’s look at it. If you have got your text, these examples I have sort of pulled out for you. By the way, it’s important to note in bullet number four. These forms are not just simply shot at you like they are to be related, they get to be much more complex and there are other forms of parallelism. You need to know that as well. Come and take Wisdom Literature. We will look at them in greater detail. These are the main ones.

But here we go. To look at some synonymous parallelisms, look at Psalm 2 where verse 3 says, “Let’s break their chains and throw off their fetters.” Isn’t that nice? Chains and fetters? Two different ways of saying something that has binding and of course, “break” and “throw off.” Verse 4, “The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.” It’s a sort of shocking idea for those of us who like to make God nice all the time. He’s laughing at people who are wicked and scoffing at them. It’s a synonymous parallelism. Then, verse 5 says, ‘He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath.’ Notice that each of these second lines is hammering home the point of the first line. So, there we have, in a very simple form, some examples of synonymous parallelism.

If you back up just one Psalm, I tried to keep these from somewhat in the same place so that we can look at them fairly easily. The last line of Psalm 1:6 is a classic case of antithetical parallelism. Now, what it’s doing is that last verse is summarizing the bigger statement that has gone before which we are going to look at in a moment. There are two big statements; one on those who trust the Lord and one on those who don’t. Now, here comes the summary statement, “The Lord watches over the way of righteous, but the way of wicked will perish.” So those who are righteous on the one hand, preserved by God as those who are wicked, their ways are going to perish. Antithetical parallelism. We see antithetical parallelism in the Psalms. You know where we see most of them, however?

In Proverbs. When we get to Proverbs, particularly chapters 10 through 15, we are going to see one after another after another of antithetical parallelism. What it is designed to do, I would suggest, is to teach the person who is studying, because the Proverbs is all about learning about life, teach that a person needs to distinguish between what's good, on one hand, and what's not on the other. See, you have these polarities being expressed; the way of righteous, the way of the wicked, truth, falsehood, joy, despair; those are the kinds of things that show up there. Those are antithetical.

Synthetic parallelism is exemplified quite nicely in the first part of the Psalm 1. Let me read that for you, again, think of each one adding a little bit of perspective to the topic. 'Blessed is the person,' well, what about him or her? "Blessed is the person who does not walk on the counsel of wicked, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers." So, we have got a kind of growing view here in every aspect of that person's life. Staying away from those things that are problematic. "In the law of the Lord and on his law, he meditates day and night. He's like a tree planted by the streams of water that yields its fruits in seasons, whose leaf does not wither and whatever he does prospers." Again, the whole picture, there is a simile, "like a tree," there always things that are added in to describe this person. And then, of course, the next two verses four and five, "not so the wicked," two big antithesis; first the righteous on the one hand, then the wicked on the other. And then, as I said earlier, verse 6 draws them together in its own little antithetical parallelism.

Well, just a couple of notes to follow up on that, these are as I suggest very powerful means of expressing truth. First of all, for all the reasons we've already said with regard to value of poetry but even more so and that gets to our third bullet here. When you have the chance to say something over again, there's a good chance that the people hearing you might remember a little bit better. That's why teachers, whether we like it or not, repeat things and repeat things and repeat things and repeat them again because you know, our minds are such that we need repetition in order really to learn and

absorb what's going on. If I say something only once in this class, I know from experience that it's usually missed and I am not making derogatory comments about you, I am just saying that there are so much to mind, to take and absorb and retain. But if it is said for multiple times, for example, if I said you, "Hey, it really would be a good idea to learn those Philistine cities for the exam," I said that I think three or four times and just that as well. This is registering, isn't it? And you are thinking, "I bet that they are going to show up on the exam on Wednesday." Repetition helps and the very fact that parallelism allows us to repeat. But not the same words that gets boring and that can turn somebody off, but using synonyms, different words but they are getting across on the same idea. Your mind processes a little bit better. So, it's marvelous way of really driving home truth whether it's synonymous or antithetical parallelism. Antithetical we're forced to discern between this and this. That's part of what the antithesis is doing.

And then, what I've got in quasi-italics here is something I just love about this because as you know, translation is a challenging enterprise. It's a very challenging enterprise. Those of you who are majoring in foreign languages know this. To represent something from one language accurately in the other language is no mean task. Think how difficult it is then to not only take truth from one language to another but also in hymn texts, for example, for those of you who still may think of looking at hymns now. There are hymns that has been translated from German chorales The persons who have translated those have been absolutely brilliant because they managed to maintain the basic meaning and convey that meaning from German into English and have rhyme and rhythm that fits the music. It's a challenge, if you go back and look at some of the German; it's not exactly always same as the English translation because there has been some interesting tweaking to make it fit the rhyme and the rhythm for the music. In Hebrew poetry, you don't have to do that because it's not based on rhyme and rhythm. It's based on conceptual parallelism. This is a wonderful mechanism, I would suggest, for conveying God's truth, in a manner, that can spread out to any language family in the

world throughout all of human history and be understood and not have to maintain those nice sounds that we have in some kinds of poetic expression as their main features. Is that making sense to you? It should cause shivers to go up and down the back of your spine because it is something that is profoundly unique, if you will. No, it's not unique because, you see parallelisms in other Semitic languages as well. But this is something that's really foundational to Hebrew poetry and that's such a large part of the First Testament truth that God has chosen to reveal to us. Alright, did I make enough points that you got it in? It hasn't been nice parallelism but I see in few ways, it's significant. Any questions on that before we go on? Few more things about Hebrew poetry, we want to say.

Okay, here we go. Some of you mentioned figurative language and that's absolutely right. You don't have to copy down these examples. You can just go look at the references a little bit later on. But, as you know, personification is giving human attribute to abstract qualities or concepts. Alright? That's what's happening here. Human or animal; maybe I should say animal and qualities as well. So, we got "the sea looking and fleeing?" Seas normally don't do that. "The sea looked and fled. The Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs," in Psalm 114. Now, that's an amazing statement and you have to use your imagination a little bit to figure out. This is really astonishing. What must be going on? So, let's look at it in a little bit bigger and larger contexts. "When Israel came out Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue, Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion." This is reflecting back on the prime event in their history--the coming out of Egypt. No wonder you've got all nature being presented as engaging in such rejoicing. "What ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs? Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." God has done a remarkable thing and therefore you have this response manifested.

Moving on to another kind of figurative language, the metaphor. As you know, both metaphors and similes set up unusual comparisons. We are so used in our



evangelical jargon saying, ‘God is a rock.’ We sing it, we say it but actually that’s fairly unusual comparison to say that God is a rock. Just get rid of all the baggage that goes along with and try thinking of what’s been conveyed by that. In what sense, is God a rock? (student responding) Okay, we could think of lifeless doll and dead either in contrast of trees and so forth and so on. By the way, even in our context, there is going to be some ambiguity. (student responding) Okay, something that is constant and basic, foundational, substantial, and unchanging. (student responding). Okay, again foundations and there is a faith built on a rock of God and so forth and so on. How about something that you stub your toe on and trip over, something that causes pain? Isaiah has a little bit of that imagery as well and it gets picked up in the New Testament too. Anyways, we don’t have time to unpack all the theology that God is a rock, but, nevertheless, think about the metaphors that show up in the Scripture.

Now, this is also very common one, “You are shield around me, O Lord,” talking about the protection that God affords to us in a world where we desperately need it. Sometimes, our contexts are a little bit so protective that we manage to protect ourselves so well and our parents do and our institutions do and et cetera. We are not aware often how desperately we need God’s protection. And here, we are told in the Psalm that God is a shield.

And then, of course, moving back to Psalm 1 which we just read, a simile, the only distinction that I know of between similes and metaphors, at least, the easiest one, is that similes does indeed import the word, “like” or “as” into it. So, we have that articulated comparisons. So, the one who is righteous would be like a tree. And then, of course, it goes on to describe the beautiful imagery, “planted by water, reaps in seasons, bearing fruits,” all those things are also part of the simile.

Okay, additional characteristics; let’s just do a couple more. The acrostic, and as you know, when we are talking about an acrostic in Hebrew poetry, that is biblical Hebrew poetry, we are talking about words, the first words of each line of the poetry that

start with successive letters of Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 is our major one because the first eight verses start with the first letter of Hebrew alphabet, Aleph. And the next eight start with Beth, and the next eight with Gimel and so forth all the way on through the Hebrew alphabet. You are thinking, ‘Okay, that’s really nice.’ By the way, these other Psalms do the same thing as does Proverbs 31 that wonderful description of the woman who is impossible to live up to, you know, that ideal woman there. We will talk about that when we talk about Proverbs, that too, starting up verse 10 of Proverbs 31 right on through the end of the chapters. Lamentations is going to involve acrostics. So, it’s a way of actually saying, “Here is a comprehensive statement about something,” in this case, all the way from A to Z, if you will. Now, again, it is not so hard if you are talking about using it once, but trying to think of eight times that you could start a line with poetry with the letter X. It’s difficult to start a line of poetry because not too many words start with these letters. Hebrew has its equivalence to X and perhaps Z. Yet, Psalmist of Psalm 119 has very carefully constructed eight lines of poetry for each one of these letters of the Hebrew alphabet. What’s the focus of Psalm 119? What’s the main emphasis there? Anybody know? (student responding) Oh, you are thinking of Psalm 19. This is Psalm 119 which is going to have some of them in there, but there is more of a driving force in every verse towards, yes, the word of God, the statutes of God, the judgments of God, and so forth; the commandments, the testimony. Overriding emphasis on this and Psalm 119, then, is going to be for us, a comprehensive statement of the utter sufficiency of word of God for everything that we might possibly need it for. Now, we might get a little bit, beyond our shortened our attention span, I could say, when we are reading through it. We need to read it with a sense of “This is a multi-faceted look at the limitless beauty of the word of God,” and that’s the purpose of the Psalmist using that whole expanse and the acrostic to convey.

Okay, just a couple of other things, also gets along with this whole full extent of matter and idea. We have what we call, number patterns. I can think of another way of

saying that, but look at Psalm 62 as our example from the Psalms and then, I will note for you most of these actually show up in the book of Proverbs. Psalm 62 says in verse 11, “One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard,” okay? One and two. And the book of Proverbs chapter 30, three things, no four, or thus, and so, and in Proverbs 6 verses 16 through 19, “six things the Lord hates, seven are utterly detestable to him” and interestingly enough among those seven, twice, we read “lying, falsehood, deceit,” are utterly detestable to God. So, it’s a way of saying, “Here is a comprehensive look at some particular issue,” and it gives some sort of sense of order to this as well. Well, we need to keep moving along. By the way, any questions on that before we actually jump into the Psalms itself?

Introduction to Psalms. As I said a moment ago, these are primarily David’s, but they are Israel’s more than anything. One of the neat things about the Psalms, as I noted for you here, is that not only are they God’s word to us, like all the rest of the Scripture, which is indeed God’s word to us, but they are reflecting human words back to God. That’s vitally important. For reasons that I hope become evident, especially when we get to the end of the lecture today. The Psalms give us really a pattern, a paradigm for expressing the whole range of human emotion. Are you joyous? There is a Psalm that matches that. You are really angry at somebody who unjustly wronged you? There is a Psalm that expresses that. You are anxious and need to learn the trust; there is a Psalm that expresses that. So, it’s a pattern or a paradigm, as I said, for our learning, not to just vent, but to channel that back to God who is sovereign God who is capable of dealing with anything that we will say to him. So, it’s learning to talk and if you read the Psalms, you get a good sense that the authors of these Psalms are not just really milk-toasted types that say all the right things. They don’t. They say what’s on their hearts. Sometimes, those things are very true to the kinds of things that we feel and need to express as well. So, they are very helpful that way.

The Psalm titles, you know that fine print that shows up ahead of the Psalm itself,

are probably not in the original Psalm text, as far as we can tell. When we read your Hebrew Bible now, you will see the Psalm titles are actually verse 1 so sometimes, your versification in the Psalms is going to be a little different in English than it is in Hebrew. Whenever they came in to the text, they do bring us some rather interesting information. So, I tried to summarize here what we can indeed learn from the Psalm titles. Not all Psalms have titles, but many of them do. But we can learn the circumstances, classic illustration because we've already mentioned it when we talked about David last time. How do we know that Psalm 51 is ascribed to that horrible circumstance after David sinned with Bathsheba and his arranged murder of Uriah and Nathan's confronting him? It's the Psalm title. The first line of Psalm 51 tells us that this is when the Psalm was written and it certainly fits. Now, I'll be the first to tell you, as you read carefully the Psalm titles, not all of it seem to fit quite as well and that might be one of the illustrations of the issue that I raised in terms of their not possibly being part of the original text.

Secondly, we do have authorships again ascribed to the Psalm, more than seventy of David. But notice some of the other ones that show up. A guy named Asaph writes some very significant Psalms. Many of them have to do with the devastation of Jerusalem and Mount Zion and the temple that they have experienced at the hands of evil people. They have to do with how to deal with evil itself, especially when it's unjust. The sons of Korah; why is that a bit unusual to have sons of Korah mentioned as possibly the authors of Psalms. Who is Korah? (student responding) Right, he's Levite, wasn't he? Because he and number of others were in rebellion against Moses and Aaron and particularly Korah, one of the priest lines, the text says, and his men were swallowed up when the earth opened up. But here we have the indication which, by the way we also have Numbers 26 that not all of the line of Korah died out. What is beautiful about this, and I may have mentioned when we were talking about Korah, but here is our chance to repeat it. Here is what is beautiful about this; God doesn't permanently reject the descendants of Korah because of what Korah did. In fact, they are reinstated and they are actually those

who are going to serve in the presence of God in the temple and even compose some of things that are Psalms. So, the sons of Korah are very interesting, and I would say, illustrative Psalm titles indicative of God's mercy, absolute mercy and forgiveness.

Well then, we have Solomon and we have Moses one ascribed to each of those, and there are some anonymous Psalms that we simply don't know. As you read these Psalm titles as well, sometimes you see some things that you just don't understand. "Shiggaion" (Ps. 7) and what is that? We don't know, but they are probably musical notes something about how they are performed, but we need to remember that these poems are Psalms. We read them. We are trying to sing little snippets of them as we start our classes. But I would encourage you at some point in your career, as a church-going person, venture into a Scottish-Presbyterian church or somewhere that sings Psalms because you will be having whole different flavor for you, not just singing little verses as we are doing, but singing whole song. It's a wonderful experience.

Well, just a bit on an arrangement, we have five Books of Psalms, as you look at them in your English translation. That, of course, parallels quite nicely our five Books of Moses, and I would suggest, it's intentionally done that way. But, here is the interesting thing. Remember our three sections of Hebrew Bible? What are they? (student responding) The first is Torah, starts with T. The second section of the Hebrew Bible is Nebiim, Prophets, and that's going to begin with Joshua. The third section is the Ketubim, the writings, and that begins with Book Psalms. Now, what's fascinating is that Joshua, as we saw when we stated that, begins with a strong exultation of God for Joshua to meditate on this Torah; Don't let it depart, meditate on it day and night. That's what we see in Psalm 1, the same theme reiterated. One who meditates on the Torah, it is a very important concept here.

Well, some basic teachings of the Psalms that we want to make a note of as well. There are others that these are the ones that are shot through the Psalms. We see them over and over and over again. First of all, who God is? You want to get sense of who God

is? Well, read the Psalms because it's clearly there in all his majesty, his mighty works on behalf of his children, the things that he has done for them over and over and over again. We get a good and profound sense, particularly of two key words. Again, not the only once, but this shows up repeatedly. God's covenant, unfailing royal love; it's the theme that comes through again and again in the Psalms. God is effecting and working his *hesed* behalf of his people.

We also have two additional terms that show up again and again and again. *Emet* is truth and related word, faithfulness, *emunah*. Truth and faithfulness; they are very much bound together. Those two things show up over and over again. Take a look at when you get a chance at Psalm 103 because that's one very beautiful and probably well-known passage. It's been a focus on those a good deal. By way of contrast, in some ways, I hope you are seeing that there is a little bit of similarity here between the purposes of Torah, show holiness of God, show the sinfulness of humankind. Well, here we have the Psalms that are illustrating the same kind of thing, the majesty of God and the sinfulness of human beings. How desperately sinful human beings need, first of all, repentance and secondly, deliverance. There are many Psalms where the human author is crying out to God for deliverance; maybe the deliverance from enemies, maybe deliverance from his own sins and his own sinful-self.

And then, thirdly, a deep love for God's words; isn't that interesting? In the Psalms, in other words, people are singing about how much they love the word of God. We don't often sing about that. We sing about other things that aren't really important. But here, they are singing about how important God's word is to them. It's flawless. It's perfect. It will do the things that necessarily have to be done in order to make us God's children. And then, of course, it goes along with an expressed determination to living a way that's pleasing to God. So, in other words, pick up on a lot Torah ideas because what's Torah for? Instruction, for us to learn how to live in a way that is pleasing to our covenant God.

What else do we have to say? Oh yes, here is where you might begin to feel a little bit like a grocery list. So, let me make a couple of introductory comments. I am not in any way trying to rob the Psalms of their beauty and their compelling capturing of your hearts. So, just be aware of that. But, sometimes it's helpful just as we discussed when we were talking about three categories of Torah. Sometimes it's helpful to have some sense of how to think about Psalm because certain types of Psalms have specific structures. So, let me run through these and make some comments about each of these categories and then encourage you to know representative examples. In other words, go look at the representative examples and see how they fit into each of these categories.

I want to add a few more categories too. First of all, there are laments. Lament of course is expressing great distress and anguish and pain of heart where something has gone wrong. These can be individual laments. These can be corporate laments. The corporate laments often come out of context for God's people having been taken into exile. They have been ripped out of their context of their land. They don't know what God is going to do with them next. But coming through the end, generally speaking, is an expression of trust in God regardless of circumstances that look so dismal. I have given you Psalms 42 and 43 if you've read these Psalms carefully; you know those two go together and the same refrain shows up in both Psalms. "Why art thou cast down, within me, O my soul?" It's an ongoing thing, it is one who is lamenting. Psalm 137 is probably the classic example of Israel as a corporate body, as a people of God lamenting their horrible circumstances, expressing distress and suffering.

Now, kind of a related category, in fact, some people actually put this next bunch in with personal lament, but I would like to think of them as separate. These are the Psalms that are penitential Psalms. As you recognize penitential are related to repentance, expressing extreme sorrow over sin. As Benjamin Warfield who is a great theologian from Princeton back in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century said, "The person who writes the penitential Psalms, in this case, 51, it's probably David. He's recognizing

what he has almost forfeit,” in other words, it says, “his entire life which he has almost forfeited as a result of sin, willful sin, disobedience and rebellion against God.” The penitential Psalms are when somebody comes to the place of realizing the only hope is if I cast myself off at the foot of the cross. This is coming through the Christians’ scene right now but it’s a Lent right, and say, “I am a mess. I completely messed this up. I need God,” and that’s what the Penitential Psalms do. Notably, 51, also 32 falls into that category as well.

Then, we will take the little change of tone a little bit here. We have Thanksgiving songs, wonderful Psalms of praise and thanks to God for what he’s done for the people. Psalm 118 is a little bit longer song, one of the most lovely parts of that is that it actually quoted “Hosanna” as the people are going up, “blessed be the name of the Lord, save us Lord. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Then, hymns of praise; this is Psalm 8, a classic example of this. This is our Psalm of course for the Psalmist praising God for the majestic creation. “O Lord how majestic, how majestic is your name in all the earth,” and then it talks about the creation that God has made and the fact that he has made humankind, “a little lower than the angels.”

There are salvation history Psalms, most of which focus on God’s amazing work on behalf of Israel bringing them and delivering them out of Egypt and bringing them into freedom and interestingly, bondage to him in Sinai. Psalm 78 starts out with the imperative, “Tell this to your children and to your children’s children.” In other words, it uses the poetic form not just to sing to the Lord but to pass the truth on. Poetry is a wonderful way for conveying truth to generation after generation as well. Psalm 78 is going to start out with that and go on talk about God’s working through his people.

The songs of Zion focus on Jerusalem, I’ll just read you a little bit of Psalm 84 because I think you might recognize it. I should read all of these but it is a matter of time. Those of you who are music majors and perhaps you know Johannes Brahms we’ve been



singing a little hymn lately, and Mia Chang is performing. But anyway, Brahms also wrote a requiem and the requiem, of course, is something that is offered generally in the context of death, but there is an aberration of Brahms made in his requiem text. Those who know this are well aware that he incorporates in Psalm 84, “how lovely is your dwelling place oh Lord of hosts,” a remarkably beautiful thing and then he goes on to talk about it. Okay? “Blessed are those whose strength is renewed who set their heart on pilgrimage,” in other words, going to Zion. Verse 7: “they go from strength to strength, until each appears before God in Zion.” Verse 10: “Better is one day in your court than a thousand elsewhere.” This is someone who loves the prospect of going up to worship God in Zion and things about it.

Alright, songs of trust, Psalm 23 and we know this one as well, “The Lord is my shepherd,” and we need to have a good sense of what shepherds were, shepherds were good figures of kings, they were also excellent figures for someone who cares profoundly minute by minute by minute for dumb sheep. And we’ve been through that already when we talked about Israel.

Okay, those are some overarching classifications that are suggested by a number of scholars who deal with these texts. I’ve got two more that I want to add for us. Forgive me. I forgot to put this one in here. I should have no animation on this one. Here’s why you want to go to Israel and study. I know you are sick at hearing this, but if I say it long enough, maybe something will happen. We saw this picture last time. This is the city of David, right here. This is all that the city of David encompassed, right here. Here is later where Solomon is going to build the temple. When you look especially if you are standing right about here, you are looking up no matter which direction you look. The mountains to the east, Hebron to the South, south hill to the west, west hill and a valley and then mountains over there, and even the temple mount. Every direction you look. North, South, East, West. You are looking up when you are on mount Zion. Psalm 121. And so then, two of our Psalms have slightly different flavor to them, don’t they. “I

will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.” And the Psalm goes on to talk about the LORD who doesn’t slumber or sleep but takes care of us. But again put it in the geographical context it unfolds whole different dimension.

Likewise, Psalm 125:2, ‘As the mountains are round about Jerusalem’ now you get a flavor of it. Here is little Jerusalem in David’s day. So the LORD surrounds his people both now and forever more. Mountains as we said earlier don’t move too quickly. Now let’s go on to what I was going to do next.

Categories. Let me give special focus to those Psalms that are Messianic Psalms. Now, each of them in and of themselves, structurally might fit in to some of those other categories, but these are important because they do focus on someone who is anointed. Our English word “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew word *Meshiach* which means to be smeared with oil or anointed with olive oil. *Meshiach* is the Hebrew and *Christós* is the Greek and so Jesus Christ is Jesus, the anointed one. These were the roles particularly in our first testament of kings and priests, some prophets as well, but particularly kings and priests.

There are more than two messianic Psalms. But these are the two I want you to know. First of all, Psalm 22, and of course, where is this psalm uttered when we read the New Testament, it’s Jesus on the cross wasn’t it. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That’s Jesus as he is hanging on the cross and the wrath of God is poured out upon him at that point of the time against all the human sins. And an indescribable separation between the persons of the trinity. God the Father is turning his wrath on God the Son and turning his back on him as well. Perfect contemplation for Lent. And of course, that’s not all that’s in Psalm 22, that’s the opening line. The audience or at least those who knew their text would’ve known the rest of it as well. “All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. ‘He trusts in the LORD,’ they say, ‘let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.’” Matthew 26 we found

the crowds are saying that kind of thing. Going on down, verse 16, “They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; . . . They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” So you see aspects of this Psalm that was originally David’s Psalm. Now coming to a full fruition in the ministry of Christ on the cross and all the thing that were part and parcel of that.

Likewise, again these are not the only two messianic Psalms, but we need to have a look at this one as well because it picks up on the Melchizedek figure, the one we know from Genesis 14. This Psalm starts out very clearly referring to kingly motives. “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” This verse is quoted number of times in the New Testament on the occasion when Jesus is having some confrontation with his opponents. This is clearly messianic reference “The LORD said to my Lord” David is speaking and Jesus will use that to challenge his opponents. But it’s not only the kingly aspect look at verse 4, “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’” The only other place in the First Testament where Melchizedek shows up, and as we said a long time ago in conjunction with Genesis 14, the author of Hebrews draws these two together, both Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 as he is talking about Jesus and Melchizedek and Melchizedek certainly being foreshadowing of Jesus as the great high priest.

Again, more messianic Psalms. We got one more category we need to do, and that is the imprecatory Psalms or if you like to pronounce it different, the imprecatory Psalms depending on whether you want to be American or British about this. What’s an imprecatory Psalm? What happens in one of these Psalms? What’s an imprecation? I guarantee you, you don’t want one uttered about you. It’s a curse, okay? These are psalms that specifically ask God to curse people. Since we’re on Psalm 110 we’re just going to back up to Psalm 109, and let me read part of it. “Oh God, whom I praise, do not remain silent for wicked and deceitful men have opened their mouths against me. They’ve

spoken against me, with lying tongues, with words of hatred, they surround me, they attack me without cause.” And he goes on to say, how really odious and covenant breaking these people are. And notice what he says starting at verse 6. “Appoint an evil man to oppose him, let a Satan,” your NIV says “accuser.” “The Satan” is the Hebrew word there. “When he is tried, let him be found guilty, and may his prayers condemn him. May his days be few.” In other words, would you please just kill him off. Well, that’s pretty sad. “May his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. May his children be wandering beggars, may they be driven from their ruined homes,” and on and on and on. And then verse 16, “For he never thought of doing a kindness, but hounded to death the poor, and the needy and the brokenhearted. He loved to pronounce a curse.” What’s happening here among other things is that the Psalmist is asking God for a measure for measure punishment. Now there’s more going on, I’m going to go over it in a minute, if we had time I would solicit your thoughts on this, but let me see if I can get through some of it on my own since it’s almost ten past. But keep in mind that the measure for justice here. The Psalmist is saying, “This guy cursed,” and it says he goes on. “He wore cursing as his garment;” so something is intrinsic to who he isn’t and how he manifests himself to people. So, God’s been asked to deal with this person as he has been dealing with others. Now, that is a problem.

Here are some considerations for us to think about in addition to what I’ve just said. By the way, this is really kind of discouraging way to end the lecture, but, on the other hand, maybe it will help us a little bit. These Psalms are part of the Scripture. We can’t take out our scissors and cut them out and say, “Um. I don’t like that one.” They are there. They are there and we need to think about it. And important thing is really in the second bullet there. The writer is asking God to deal with this. Most of us when we get into this kind of situation where injustice has been done like to take it upon ourselves. We don’t go out and chop off somebody’s head, but verbally, we often do the same thing by spreading all sorts of gossip all over everywhere. This Psalmist hasn’t done that. He is not

taking vengeance either verbally or otherwise, he is asking God to take care of the problem which is, of course, the best place to do it and take the issue.

As you read the entire Psalm and there are other Psalms as well, as I said 140 and then sections of number of other Psalms. Do you get the point by the way that shows up repeatedly in the Psalms, it must be a major problem. Having to deal with injustices, having to deal with people who are just plain evil; Okay? The writer is concerned for God's glory. The writer also recognizes as we need to that he's a sinner. He is in need of God's mercy as much as anybody else. It's just the other person in this context has been operating entirely contrary to covenant obligations under which they all live. By the way, parts of the Psalm show up in the Book Acts when Judas is being referenced, interestingly.

And then, finally, no gloating over the fall of the enemy and then hoping the prospect that if a person is indeed turned over to God's treatment, chastisement, that might bring that might just bring repentance. I know it's past time, I'd love to invite your comments but you need to run on to chapel. See you Wednesday. All prepare for the exam.

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