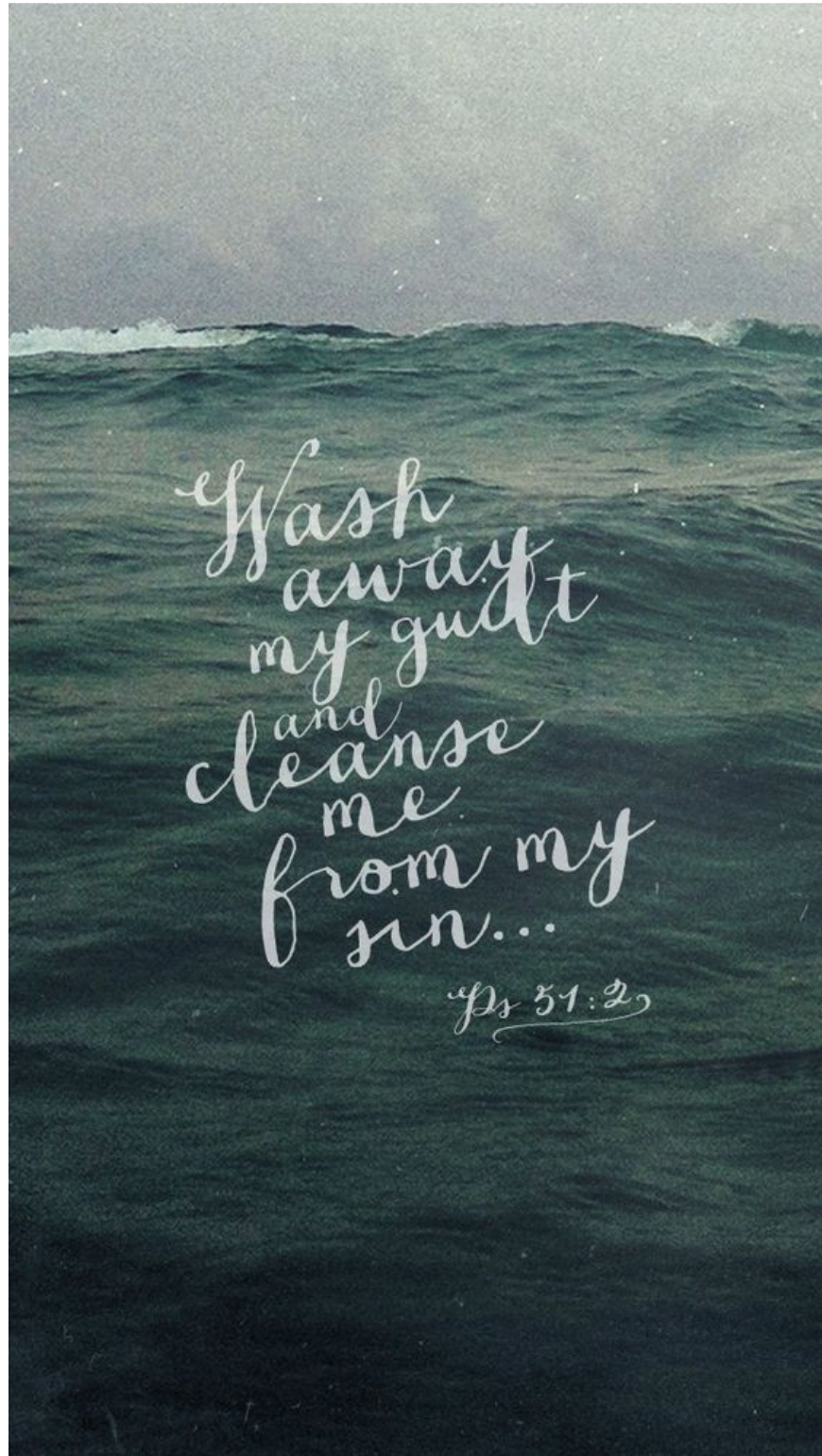


An Exegetical Overview of Psalm 51—A Prayer for Forgiveness



(<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/125608277084195678/>)

1. Morphological Analysis of Psalm 51

<p>לְדָוִד:¹ לְ · דָוִד of · David of · David P · NPMSA</p>	<p>מִזְמוֹר מִזְמוֹר psalm a psalm NC-SA</p>	<p>לְמַנְצֵחַ לְ · הַ · נָצַח to · the · direct to · the · director¹ P · A · VbR-MSA</p>	1
<p>הַנָּבִיא כְּאֲשֶׁר-בָּא הַ · נָבִיא כְּאֲשֶׁר · בּוֹא the · prophet as that · he had gone the · prophet P · VaP3MS A · NC-SA</p>	<p>נָתַן נָתַן Nathan Nathan NPMSA</p>	<p>בָּבוֹא-אֵלָיו בְּ · בּוֹא · אֵל · הוּא at · come · to · he at · coming · to · him P · VaF---C · P · RS3MS</p>	2
<p>אֶל-בֵּת-שֶׁבַע: אֶל · בֵּת-שֶׁבַע to · Bathsheba to · Bathsheba P · NPFSA</p>			
<p>כְּחֶסֶדְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּ · חֶסֶד · אֱתָה according to · loyal love · you God according to · loyal love · your O God P · NC-SC · RS2MS NCMPA</p>	<p>חַנּוּנִי חֲנַן · אֲנִי be gracious · I be gracious have mercy · [to] [on] me VaM2MS · RS1-S</p>	3	
<p>רַחֲמֶיךָ מְתָה רַחֲמִים · אֶתָּה compassion · you compassion(s) · your VaM2MS NCMPA · RS2MS</p>	<p>כְּרֹב כְּ · רֹב according to · multitude according to · the multitude greatness of P · NC-SC</p>		
<p>פְּשָׁעִי: פְּשָׁע · אֲנִי transgression · I transgressions · my NCMPA · RS1-S</p>			

¹Van der Merwe, C. (2004). *The Lexham Hebrew-English Interlinear Bible* (Ps 51:1–21). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

4 הַרְבֵּה כִּבְּסֵנִי מֵעֲוֹנִי
הַרְבֵּה כִּבְּסֵנִי מֵעֲוֹנִי
make great wash · I
greatly|thoroughly¹ from · iniquity · my wash · me
D P · NC-SC · RS1-S VbM2MS · RS1-S

וּמַחֲטָאֵתִי טַהַרְנִי:
ן · מִן · חַטָּאת · אֲנִי טַהַר · אֲנִי
cleans · I and · from · sin · I
cleans · me and · from · sin · my
VbM2MS · RS1-S C · P · NCFSC · RS1-S

5 כִּי־פָשַׁעִי אֲנִי אֲדַע אֲנִי וְחַטָּאתִי נִגְדִי
כִּי · פָּשַׁע · אֲנִי אֲדַע אֲנִי וְחַטָּאת · אֲנִי נִגְדִי
before · I and · sin · I know I for · transgression^a · I
[is] before · me and · sin · my I know I for · transgressions · my
NC-SC · RS1-S C · NCFSC · RS1-S VaI1-S RP1-S C · NCMPC · RS1-S

תָּמִיד:

תָּמִיד

continually

continually

NC-SA

6 לָךְ לְבַדְּךָ* חַטָּאתִי וְהָרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ
לָךְ אַתָּה לְ · בַּד · אַתָּה חַטָּא וְהָרַע בְּ · עֵינִי · אַתָּה
in · eye · you and · the · evil sin to · alone · you against · you
in · eyes · your and · the · evil I have sinned to · alone · you against · you
P · NC-DC · RS2MS C · A · J-SA VaP1-S P · NCMSC · RS2MS P · RS2MS

עָשִׂיתִי לְמַעַן תִּצְדַּק בְּדִבְרֶךָ תִּזְכֶּה
עָשִׂה לְמַעַן צַדִּיק בְּ · דִּבְרֶךָ אַתָּה זָכָה
be blameless in · speak · you be righteous so that do
you are blameless in · speaking¹ · your you are right(eous) so that I have done
VaI2MS P · VaF---C · RS2MS VaI2MS P VaP1-S

בְּשִׁפְטֶךָ:

בְּ · שִׁפְטֶךָ אַתָּה

in · judge · you

in · judging · your

P · VaF---C · RS2MS

אָמִי:	יִהְיֶה לִּי	וְיִבְחַטָּא	חֹלְלָתִי	הִרְבַּעְנוֹן	7
אִם · אָנִי	יָחַם · אָנִי	וְ · בָּ · חָטָא	חִיל	הֵן · בָּ · עוֹן	
mother · I	conceive · I	and · in · sin	be born	look · in · guilt	
mother · my	(she) conceived · me	and · in · sin	I was born	look · in · guilt	
NC-SC · RS1-S	VbP3FS · RS1-S	C · P · NC-SA	VAP1-S	X · P · NC-SA	

בְּטָחוֹת	חֲפִצָּה	הִרְאָמַת	8
בָּ · הָ · טָחוֹת	חֲפִץ	הֵן · אָמַת	
in · the · heart	desire	look · trustworthiness/faithfulness	
in · the · heart	you desire	look ·	
P · A · NCFPA	VaP2MS	trustworthiness/faithfulness truth	
		X · NCFSA	

תּוֹדִיעֵנִי:	חֲכָמָה	וְיִבְסְתֶּם	
יָדַע · אָנִי	חֲכָמָה	וְ · בָּ · סֵתֶם	
teach · I	wisdom	and · in · keep secret/shut up	
you teach · me	wisdom	and · in · secret	
VcI2MS · RS1-S	NCFSA	C · P · VaS-MSA	

תְּכַבֵּטֵנִי	וְאֶטְהַר	בְּאֶזוֹב	תְּחַטְּאֵנִי	9
כָּבַס · אָנִי	וְ · טָהַר	בָּ · אֶזוֹב	חָטָא · אָנִי	
wash · I	and · be clean	with · hyssop	purify · I	
(you must) wash · me	and · I shall be clean	with · hyssop	(you must) purify · me	
VbI2MS · RS1-S	C · Vaw1-S	P · NC-SA	VbI2MS · RS1-S	

אֶלְבִּין:	וּמִשְׁלֵג		
לָבָן	וְ · מִן · שֵׁלֵג		
be white	and · from · snow		
I shall be white[r]	and · from than · snow		
VcI1-S	C · P · NC-SA		

תִּגְלֶנָּה	וְשִׂמְחָה	שִׂשׁוֹן	תְּשַׁמֵּיעֵנִי	10
גִּיל	וְ · שִׂמְחָה	שִׂשׁוֹן	שָׁמַע · אָנִי	
rejoice	and · jubilation	gladness/joy	cause to hear/let hear · I	
(they) will rejoice	and · jubilation	joy	(you must) let hear · me	
VaI3FP	C · NCFSA	NC-SA	VcI2MS · RS1-S	

עֲצָמוֹת	דָּבִית:		
לְעָצָם	דָּכָה		
bone	crush		
you crushed [the] bones			
VbP2MS	NCFPA		

11	הִסְתַּר	פָּנֶיךָ	מִחַטָּאִי	וְכָל־עֲוֹנֹתַי
	סִתַּר	פָּנֶה · אֶתָּה	מִן · חַטָּא · אֲנִי	ן · כָּל · עֲוֹן · אֲנִי
	hide	face · you	from · sin · I	and · all · iniquity · I
	hide	face · your	from · sins · my	and · all (of) · iniquities guilt · my
	VcM2MS	NCMPC · RS2MS	NCMPC · RS1-S	C · NC-SC · NCFPC · RS1-S

מָחָה:

מָחָה

blot out

blot out

VaM2MS

12	לֵב טָהוֹר	בְּרָא־לִי	אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחַ	נָכוֹן	חֲדָשׁ
	לֵב טָהוֹר	בְּרָא · לְ · אֲנִי	אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחַ	כּוֹן	חֲדָשׁ
	clean heart	create · for · I	God and · spirit	be steadfast	renew
	clean a heart	create · for · me	O God and · a spirit	steadfast ¹	renew
	J-SA	NC-SA	NCMPA	VdR-MSA	VbM2MS

בְּקִרְבִּי:

בְּ · קִרְבִּי · אֲנִי

in · inner part · I

in · inner parts · my

P · NC-SC · RS1-S

13	אֶל־תִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי	מִלִּפְנֵיךָ*	וְרוּחַ
	אֶל · שָׁלַךְ · אֲנִי	מִן · לְ · פָּנֶה · אֶתָּה	ן · רוּחַ
	not · cast away · I	from · to · face · you	and · spirit
	not · you must cast away · me	from · to · the face of · you	and · the spirit of
	G · VcI2MS-J · RS1-S	P · P · NCMPC · RS2MS	C · NC-SC

מִמֶּנִּי:

מִן ·

אֲנִי

from · I

from · me

P · RS1-S

אֶל־תִּקַּח

אֶל · לָקַח

not · take

not · you must

take

G · VaI2MS-J

קִדְשְׁךָ

קִדְשִׁי · אֶתָּה

holiness · you

holiness · your

NC-SC ·

RS2MS

14	הַשִּׁיבָה	לִי	שִׂשׁוֹן	יִשְׁעָךָ	וְרוּחַ	נְדִיבָה
	שׁוּב	לְ · אֲנִי	שִׂשׁוֹן	יִשְׁעֵי · אֶתָּה	ן · רוּחַ	נְדִיב
	restore · [obj]	to · I	jubilation	salvation · you	and · spirit	noblenes _s
	restore	to · me	the jubilation of	salvation · your	and · a spirit of	noblenes _s
	VcM2MS--H	P · RS1-S	NC-SC	NC-SC · RS2MS	C · NC-SA	JFSA

תִּסְמְכֵנִי:

סמ · אני

sustain · I

you must sustain [in] · me

VaI3FS-J · RS1-S

15 אֶלְמָדָה פִּשְׁעִים דְּרָכֶיךָ וְסֹטְאִים אֵלֶיךָ
למד פשע דרך · אתה ו · סטא אל · אתה
to · you and · sinner way · you transgress teach
to · you and · sinners ways · your transgressors¹ I will teach
P · RS2MS C · JMPA NCMPC · RS2MS VaR-MPA VbI1-S-C

יָשׁוּבוּ:

שוב

return

they will return

Val3MP

16 הַצִּילֵנִי מִדָּמִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי תְּשׁוּעָתִי
נצל · אני מן · דם אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי תְּשׁוּעָה · אני
salvation · I God God from · blood deliver · I
salvation · my God of O God from · bloodguilt deliver · me
NCFSC · RS1-S NCMPC NCMPA P · NCMPA VcM2MS · RS1-S

תִּרְגֵּן לְשׁוֹנִי צְדָקָתְךָ:
רנן לשון · אני צדקה · אתה
sing for joy tongue · I
[of] righteousness · your tongue · my (she|it) will sing for joy
NCFSC · RS2MS NC-SC · RS1-S VbI3FS

17 אֲדוֹן אֲנִי שְׂפָה אֲנִי שְׂפָתִי תִפְתָּח וְאִפִּי יִגִּיד
אדון · אני שפה · אני שפת · אני פתח ופה · אני
tell/proclaim lip · I open (you must) open and · mouth · I
he|it will proclaim and · mouth · my (you must) open lips · my o Lord · *
VcI3MS C · NC-SC · RS1-S VaI2MS NCMPC · RS1-S NPMSA · RS1-S

תְּהַלֵּלְךָ:

תְּהַלֵּלָהּ · אתה

praise · you

praise · your

NCFSC · RS2MS

18 כִּי לֹא-תִחַפֵּץ זָבַח וְאֶתְנָה עֹלָה לֹא
כי לא · חפץ זבח ונתן עולה לא
sacrifice not · delight for
not a burnt offering and|or else · I would give [it] [in] sacrifice not · you delight for

תרצה:

רצה

accept with pleasure
you accept with pleasure
Val2MS

19	זָבְחִי	אֱלֹהִים	רוּחַ*	נִשְׁבְּרָה	לִב־נִשְׁבֵּר
	זָבַח	אֱלֹהִים	רוּחַ	נִשְׁבַּר	לֵב · נִשְׁבַּר
	sacrifice	God	spirit	be broken	heart · be broken
	the sacrifices of	God	a spirit of	being broken ¹ [are]	a heart of · being broken ²
	NCMPC	NCMPA	NC-SC	VdR-FSA	NC-SA · VdR-MSA

וְנִדְכָּה	אֱלֹהִי	לֹא	תִבְזֶה:
וְ · דָכָה	אֱלֹהִי	לֹא	בִזָּה
and · be crushed	God	not	despise
and · being crushed	O God	not	you will despise
C · VdR-MSA	NCMPA	G	Val2MS

20	הִיטִיבָה	בְּרִצּוֹנָךְ	אֶת-צִיּוֹן	תִּבְנֶה	חוֹמוֹת
	יֵטֵב	כְּ · רִצּוֹן ·	אֶת · צִיּוֹן	בְּנָה	חוֹמָה
	do good · [obj]	in · pleasure · you	[obj] · Zion	build	wall
	do good	in · pleasure · your	[obj] · [to] Zion	you must build	the walls of
	VcM2MS--H	P · NC-SC · RS2MS	PO · NP-SA	Val2MS-J	NCFPC

ירוּשָׁלַם:

ירוּשָׁלַם
Jerusalem
Jerusalem
NP-SA

21	אָז	תַּחֲפִיץ	זִבְחֵי-צֶדֶק	עֹלָה
	אָז	חִפֵּץ	זָבַח · צֶדֶק	עֹלָה
	then	delight	sacrifice · righteousness	burnt offering
	you will delight then		sacrifices of · righteousness	[in] burnt offering[s]
	D	Val2MS	NCMPC · NC-SA	NCFSA

וְכָלֵיל	אָז	יַעֲלוּ	עַל-מִזְבֵּחַךְ
וְ · כָלֵיל	אָז	עָלָה	עַל · מִזְבֵּחַ · אֹתָהּ

on · altar · you	offer	then	and · whole burnt offering
on · altar · your	(they) will be offered	then and · [in] whole burnt offering[s]	
P · NC-SC · RS2MS	Vcl3MP	D	C · J-SA

פְּרִים:

פָּר

bull

bulls

NCMPA

2. Hebrew Text Analysis and Notes

Psalm 51 is usually classified as a “lament” psalm: However, “It has no complaint against the enemy and no plea to God to act against the enemy.”² On the other hand, one could argue that in this case the “enemy” is oneself, and the “plea to God” involves a personal appeal for forgiveness and restoration (cf. Ps. 38). Generally speaking, Psalm 51 assumes the following symmetrical (concentric) structure and paralleled message.³ The corresponding poetic units (stanzas) are relatively balanced in terms of lexical “weight,” excluding the superscription (Heb. vv. 1-2):

A. Prologue—Appeal for God’s mercy in individual forgiveness (vv. 1-2)

B. Personal confession of sinfulness (3-6)

C. Prayer for forgiveness and renewed joy (7-9)⁴

C’ Prayer for purity and renewed joy (10-12)

B’ Personal profession of consecration (13-17)

A’ Epilogue—Appeal for God’s communal blessing upon Zion (18-19)

² Nancy DeClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms* (NICOT), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014:454.

³ Contra Weiser’s opinion (recorded in Tate 1990:12). DeClaissé-Walford, et.al. (loc. cit.) propose a structure that agrees with the above in some respects, but not in others: Introductory Words – a Plea for Mercy (vv. 1-2); Words of Confession (vv. 3-6); The Plea Resumed (vv. 7-12); The Vow (vv. 13-15); Concluding Words – the Nature of Sacrifice (vv. 16-17); A Prayer for Zion (vv. 18-19). What do you think? Study this psalm and come to your own conclusion about its structural-topical arrangement, which is, of course, an important aspect of the text’s intended meaning.

⁴ The first half of Ps. 51 manifests a concentric arrangement of key topics (Goldingay 2007:130):

Wipe away (v. 1) – wash me (2a) – purify (2b) – I acknowledge (3) – I have sinned (4a) – **you are faithful** (4b)

I am sinful (5) – make me acknowledge (6) – so that I may be pure (7a) – wash me (7b) – wipe away (9).

The Hebrew text below is paralleled by the NET version in English along with many of this version's helpful notes (<https://net.bible.org/#!bible/Psalms+51:13>), occasionally adapted or supplemented and accompanied by additional exegetical observations as needed.⁵ Colored shading is used to highlight selected phonological correspondences or reiterated key terms, and we note that the psalm as a whole features a great deal of lexical repetition (for a summary, see Goldingay 2007:124).

NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NET)	HEBREW MT
1 For the music director; a psalm of David, ¹	¹ לְמִנְצַח מְזִמֹּר לְדָוִד:
written when Nathan the prophet confronted him	² בָּבוֹא־אֵלָיו נָתַן הַנָּבִיא
after David's affair with Bathsheba. ²	כְּאֲשֶׁר־בָּא אֶל־בֵּת־שֶׁבַע:
Have mercy on me, O God, because of ³ your loyal love!	³ חַנּוּנִי אֱלֹהִים כְּחַסְדְּךָ
Because of your great compassion, ⁴ wipe away my rebellious acts! ⁵	כָּרֶב רָחֲמֶיךָ מַחֵה פְשָׁעַי:
2 Wash away my wrongdoing! ⁶	⁴ הָרְבָה כִּבְסֵנִי מַעֲוֹנִי
Cleanse me of my sin! ⁷	וּמַחֲטָאתִי טַהַרְנִי:
¹ <i>Psalm 51.</i> The psalmist confesses his sinfulness to God and begs for forgiveness and a transformation of his inner character. According to the psalm superscription, David offered this prayer when Nathan confronted him with his sin following the king's affair with Bathsheba (see 2 Sam 11-12). Some scholars suggest that the final two verses of the psalm do not fit this situation, for they seem to assume the walls of Jerusalem have been destroyed and that the sacrificial system has been temporarily suspended. Thus they propose that these verses are an addition to the psalm made during the period of exile following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 b.c. The exiles could relate to David's experience, for they, like him, and had been forced to confront their sin. They appropriated David's ancient prayer and applied it to their own circumstances. ⁶ However, these verses could also be interpreted as David's	Another option is that the psalmist is comparing forgiveness to erasing or blotting out names from a register (see Exod 32:32-33). In this case one might translate, "erase all record of my rebellious acts." ⁶ <i>Lit.</i> "Thoroughly wash me from my wrongdoing." ⁷ In vv. 1b-2, along with the series of pleas in the imperative voice, the psalmist uses three different words to emphasize the multi-faceted character and degree of his sin. Whatever one wants to call it ("rebellious acts," "wrongdoing," "sin"), he has done it and stands morally polluted in God's sight. The same three words appear in Exod 34:7, which emphasizes that, in keeping with his gracious covenant, God is willing to forgive sin in all of its many dimensions (cf. also Ps

⁵ Several non-relevant NET notes have been deleted.

⁶ I would support the contrary opinion regarding this issue of textual "addition," see DeClaissé et.al. 2014:457; cf. also Goldingay 2007:125, 138-139. In agreement with those who conclude that vv. 18-19 "are a later addition" are Robert G. Bratcher & Wm. D. Reyburn (B&R), *A Handbook on Psalms*, New York: United Bible Societies, 1991:467 (also Tate 1990:29).

<p>prayer on behalf of his city—that his gross sin with Bathsheba (cf. the psalm’s superscript) would not bring the Lord’s punitive wrath down upon his people as well.</p> <p>² <i>Lit.</i> “a psalm by David, when Nathan the prophet came to him when he had gone to Bathsheba.” The correspondence here in the two “comings” (lit. Heb.) is both rhetorically and theologically significant.</p> <p>³ Or “according to.”</p> <p>⁴ We note the build-up of key covenantal terms; the LORD’s mercy must restore fellowship with those who sincerely repent of their transgressions.</p> <p>⁵ Traditionally, “blot out my transgressions.” Because of the reference to washing and cleansing in the following verse, it is likely that the psalmist is comparing forgiveness to wiping an object clean (note the use of the verb מָחָה in the sense of “wipe clean; dry” in 2 Kgs 21:13; Prov 30:20; Isa 25:8).</p>	<p>51:5, 7, 9, 13). In v. 2 the psalmist uses a chiastic construction in comparing forgiveness and restoration to physical cleansing (V-cleansing + from-sin // from-sin + V-cleansing). Perhaps he likens spiritual cleansing to the purification rites of priestly law, which are referred to at the end of the psalm (vv. 16-19).</p> <p>“Words for sin come twelve times in vv. 1-9 and twice in vv. 10-19; God is named once in vv. 1-9 and six times in vv. 10-19. Sin gives way to God; with confession, sin gives way to God’s presence” (Goldingay 2007:14). For a listing of the correspondences of Psalm 51’s concern for <i>sinfulness</i> and the need for personal <i>confession</i> with reference to the prophetic literature, see Tate 1990:9-10. See also Tate for a detailed lexical analysis of the various words for “sin” in vv. 1-2 (1990:13-16).</p>
<p>3 For I am aware of⁸ my rebellious acts;</p>	<p>5 כִּי־פָשַׁעַי אֲנִי אֹדֵעַ</p>
<p>I am forever conscious of my sin.⁹</p>	<p>וְחַטָּאתַי נִגְדִי תָמִיד:</p>
<p>4 Against you – you above all¹⁰ – I have sinned;</p>	<p>6 לִּי לְבַדְּךָ חַטָּאתִי</p>
<p>I have done what is evil in your sight.</p>	<p>וְהָרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עָשִׂיתִי</p>
<p>So¹¹ you are just when you confront me;¹²</p>	<p>לְמַעַן תִּצְדֶּק בְּדִבְרֶךָ</p>
<p>you are right when you condemn me.¹³</p>	<p>תִּזְכֶּה בְּשִׁפְטֶךָ:</p>
<p>5 Look, I was guilty of sin from birth,</p>	<p>7 הֵן־בְּעֶוֹן חוֹלַלְתִּי</p>
<p>a sinner the moment my mother conceived me.¹⁴</p>	<p>וּבְחַטָּא יִחַמְתַּנִּי אִמִּי:</p>
<p>6 Look,¹⁵ you desire¹⁶ integrity in the inner man;¹⁷</p>	<p>8 הֵן־אֵמֶת חִפְצְךָ בְּטָחוֹת</p>
<p>you want me to possess wisdom.¹⁸</p>	<p>וּבִסֵּתָם חֲכָמָה תוֹדִיעֵנִי:</p>
<p>⁸ <i>Lit.</i> “know,” i.e., acknowledge, confess (B&R 1991:469); the initial explanatory כִּי may have also an asseverative force here: “For <i>to be sure</i>...” The psalmist’s petitions of vv. 1-2 are supported now by his reasons/motives for God’s response in vv. 3-6.</p> <p>⁹ <i>Lit.</i> “and my sin [is] in front of me continually.” The fronted פָּשַׁעַי is an instance of N-constituent focus—a foregrounding device that is prominent throughout this entire strophe (vv. 3-6).</p>	<p>¹⁴ <i>Heb</i> “Look [or ‘Yes!’], in wrongdoing I was brought forth, and in sin my mother conceived me.” The prefixed verbal form in the second line is probably a preterite (without <i>vav</i> [ו] consecutive), stating a simple historical fact. The psalmist is not suggesting that he was conceived through an inappropriate sexual relationship ... The psalmist’s point is that he has been a sinner from the very moment his personal exist-</p>

<p>¹⁰ <i>Lit.</i> “only you” (note the alliteration and the repeated personal pronouns: I—you), as if the psalmist had sinned exclusively against God and no other (since he is so focused in his appeal to God alone). Since the Hebrew verb אָחַז (“to sin”) is used elsewhere of sinful acts against people (see BDB 306 s. v. 2a) and David (the presumed author) certainly sinned when he murdered Uriah (2 Sam 12:9), it is likely that the psalmist is overstating the case to suggest that the attack on Uriah was ultimately an attack on God himself. To clarify the point of the hyperbole, the translation uses “especially,” rather than the potentially confusing “only.”</p> <p>¹¹ The Hebrew term לְמַעַן normally indicates purpose (“in order that”), but here it introduces a logical consequence of the preceding statement. (Taking the clause as indicating purpose here would yield a theologically illogical idea – the psalmist purposely sinned so that God’s justice might be vindicated!) For other examples of לְמַעַן indicating result, see 2 Kgs 22:17; Jer 27:15; Amos 2:7, as well as <i>IBHS</i> 638-40 §38.3.7</p> <p>¹² <i>Lit.</i> “when you speak,” that is, in your pronouncing the sentence of “Guilty!” (B&R 469). In this context the psalmist refers to God’s word of condemnation against his sin delivered through Nathan (cf. 2 Sam 12:7-12).</p> <p>¹³ <i>Lit.</i> “when you judge.”</p>	<p>ence began. By going back beyond the time of birth to the moment of conception, the psalmist makes his point more emphatically in the second line than in the first. “What the psalmist is saying is that he (and so, by implication, everyone) is a sinner; sin is ingrained in human nature and permeates all of human activity” (B&R 470).</p> <p>¹⁵ The juxtaposition of two occurrences of “look” (הִנֵּה) in vv. 5-6 draws attention to the sharp contrast between man’s nature and God’s requirement—the sinful reality of the psalmist’s condition and the righteous ideal that God has set for him in life.</p> <p>¹⁶ The perfect is used in a generalizing sense here—a life-long righteousness (cf. Ps. 1).</p> <p>¹⁷ <i>Lit.</i> “in the covered [places],” i.e., in the inner man—the heart from which sin arises.</p> <p>¹⁸ <i>Lit.</i> “in the secret [place] wisdom you cause me to know.” The Hiphil verbal form is causative, while the imperfect is used in a modal sense to indicate God’s desire (note the parallel verb “desire”). For explanation of the difficult v. 6, see Tate 1990:20; B&R 470.</p> <p><i>You want me to possess wisdom.</i> Here “wisdom” does not mean “intelligence” or “learning,” but refers to moral insight and skill in applying God’s principles in life.</p>
<p>7 Sprinkle me ¹⁹ with water ²⁰ and I will be pure; ²¹</p>	<p>9 תַּחַטְּאֵנִי בְּאֵזוֹב וְאֶטְהַר</p>
<p>wash me ²² and I will be whiter than snow. ²³</p>	<p>תִּכְבֶּסֶנִי וּמַשְׁלֵג אֲלֵבִין:</p>
<p>8 Grant me the ultimate joy of being forgiven! ²⁴</p>	<p>10 תִּשְׂמִיעֵנִי שִׁשׁוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה</p>
<p>May the bones ²⁵ you crushed rejoice! ²⁶</p>	<p>תִּגְלֹלָה עַצְמוֹת דְּבִית:</p>
<p>9 Hide your face ²⁷ from my sins!</p>	<p>11 הַסֵּתֵר פְּנֶיךָ מִחַטָּאֵי</p>
<p>Wipe away ²⁸ all my guilt!</p>	<p>וְכָל-עֲוֹנֹתַי מִחָה:</p>
<p>¹⁹ The imperfect verbal form is used here to express the psalmist’s wish or request. ²⁰ <i>Lit.</i> “cleans me with hyssop.” “Hyssop” was a small plant (see 1 Kgs 4:33) used to apply water (or blood) in purification rites (see Exod 12:22; Lev</p>	<p>²⁶ In this context of petitionary prayer, the prefixed verbal form is understood as a jussive, expressing the psalmist’s strong wish or personal request to God.</p>

⁷ See also John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 2: Psalms 42-89*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007:122; Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20), Waco, TX: Word, 1990:5-6, 18.

<p>14:4-6, 49-52; Num 19:6-18. The psalmist uses the language and imagery of such rites to describe spiritual cleansing through forgiveness.</p> <p>²¹ After the preceding imperfect, the imperfect with <i>vav</i> (ו) conjunctive indicates result.</p> <p>²² The imperfect verbal form is used here to express the psalmist's fervent wish or request.</p> <p>²³ <i>I will be whiter than snow</i>. Whiteness here symbolizes the moral purity resulting from God's forgiveness (see Isa 1:18).</p> <p>²⁴ <i>Lit.</i> "cause me to hear happiness and joy." The language is metonymic: the effect of forgiveness (joy) has been substituted for its cause. The psalmist probably alludes here to an assuring word from God announcing that his sins are forgiven (a so-called divine oracle of forgiveness). The imperfect verbal form is used here to express the psalmist's wish or request. The synonyms "happiness" and "joy" are joined together as a hendiadys to emphasize the degree of joy he anticipates.</p> <p>²⁵ <i>May the bones you crushed rejoice</i>. The psalmist compares his sinful condition to that of a person who has been physically battered and crushed. Within this metaphorical framework, his "bones" refer to the basis for his emotional strength.</p>	<p>²⁷ In this context <i>Hide your face from my sins</i> means "Do not hold me accountable for my sins"—this is "another prayer for forgiveness. ... Verse 9 (also verses 11-12), like verse 2, is chiasmic, which is structurally relevant, as this verse falls at the approximate center of the psalm. The psalmist has again employed chiasmus as a poetic device in his petition to God to remove all his sin" (B&R 472).</p> <p>²⁸ See the note on the similar expression "wipe away my rebellious acts" in v. 1. "Two opening lines of appeal (vv. 1-2) and three later lines of appeal (vv. 7-9) thus bracket five lines of confession" (Goldingay 2007: 131). The pleas of vv. 7-9, however, are noticeably stepped up emotively (e.g., with figurative language) from those of vv. 1-2 in accord with the typical pattern of A—B parallelism. In these verses, "the psalmist begins to think beyond guilt and alienation."⁸ His rhetorical strategy of progressive hortatory intensification continues then in the next strophe, vv. 10-12, with an additional set of petitions relating to the "spiritual" dimension of life.</p>
<p>10 Create for me a pure heart, O God! ²⁹</p>	<p>12 לֵב טָהוֹר בְּרָא־לִי אֱלֹהִים</p>
<p>Renew a resolute spirit within me! ³⁰</p>	<p>וְרוּחַ נָכוֹן חֲדָשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי:</p>
<p>11 Do not reject me! ³¹</p>	<p>13 אַל-תִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מִלִּפְנֵיךָ</p>
<p>Do not take your Holy Spirit ³² away from me! ³³</p>	<p>וְרוּחַ קְדֹשְׁךָ אַל-תִּקַּח מִמֶּנִּי:</p>
<p>12 Let me again experience the joy of your deliverance!</p>	<p>14 הַשִּׁיבָה לִי שְׂשׂוֹן יִשְׁעֶךָ</p>
<p>Sustain me by giving me the desire to obey! ³⁴</p>	<p>וְרוּחַ נְדִיבָה תִּסְמְכֵנִי:</p>
<p>²⁹ The <i>heart</i> (fronted constituent focus in vv. 12-14) is viewed here as the seat of the psalmist's motives and moral character. The vocative אֱלֹהִים echoes the one at the beginning of the appeal (v. 1), thus helping to mark the onset of the psalm's second half (structural <i>anaphora</i>). The verb "create" (בְּרָא) is rather rare and suggests "the sovereign power God exercises in doing something seemingly impossible" (Goldingay 2007:133); "the psalmist has in mind an act of generativity that is as fully wondrous as the initial act of divine generativity in</p>	<p>³² <i>Your Holy Spirit</i>. The personal Spirit of God is mentioned frequently in the OT, but only here and in Isa 63:10-11 is he called "your/his Holy Spirit." God's breath-spirit is the source of life, not only of physical existence but, in a higher sense, of a moral meaningful life, life in fellowship with and dependent upon God, life that is dedicated to him (cf. B&R 473). For a discussion of this reference to the deity, "when 'spirit' is associated with God," see Tate 1990:23-25.</p>

⁸ Walter Brueggemann and Wm. H. Bellinger, Jr. (B&B), *Psalms*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014:236.

<p>Genesis 1” (B&B 237). By a “clean heart” the psalmist is probably not referring to a heart free of impurity, but rather to a single-minded, wholehearted devotion to God’s will (as in Matt 5:8) (B&R 472). “By verse 10, the poem moves from confession to petition in a series of imperatives addressed to the God of mercy and steadfast love; these petitions constitute an act of hope for a renewed, restored relationship with God” (B&B 236)—with a focus now on a consecrated life-style that naturally follows upon a confession of sin.</p> <p>³⁰ <i>Lit.</i> “and a reliable spirit renew in my inner being.” “In many languages if the local word for spirit is used in line b, the meaning is apt to refer to one’s spiritual existence in contrast to the physical. Therefore in those languages, it may be advisable to use the word for heart in both a and b; for example, “a heart which is pure and a new heart which is loyal.” (B&R 472).</p> <p>³¹ <i>Lit.</i> “do not cast me away from before you.”</p>	<p>³³ <i>Do not take...away.</i> The psalmist expresses his fear that, due to his sin, God will take away the empowering Holy Spirit (cf. Isa 63:10-11). NT believers enjoy the permanent gift of the Holy Spirit and need not make such a request nor fear such a consequence. However, in the OT God’s Spirit enabled certain individuals for special tasks and only temporarily resided in them. For example, when God rejected Saul as king and chose David to replace him, the divine Spirit left Saul and came upon David (1 Sam 16:13-14).</p> <p>³⁴ <i>Lit.</i> “and [with] a willing spirit sustain me.” The psalmist asks that God make him the kind of person who eagerly obeys the divine commandments—that “God would provide him with an obedient spirit, that is, a disposition, a willingness, to serve him” (B&R 473). The imperfect verbal form is again used here to express the psalmist’s ardent wish or plea for a permanent state.</p>
13 Then I will teach ³⁵ rebels your merciful ways, ³⁶	15 אֲלַמְדָּה פְּשָׁעִים דְּרַבִּיךָ
and sinners will turn ³⁷ to you.	יְחַטְּאִים אֵלֶיךָ יִשׁוּבוּ:
14 Rescue me from the guilt of murder, O God, ³⁸	16 הַצִּילֵנִי מִדְּמַיִם אֱלֹהִים
the God ⁹ who delivers me!	אֱלֹהֵי תְּשׁוּעָתִי
Then my tongue will shout for joy because of your deliverance. ³⁹	תִּרְנֵן לְשׁוֹנִי צְדָקָתְךָ:
15 O Lord, give me the words! ⁴⁰	17 אֲדַנִּי שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח
Then my mouth will praise you. ⁴¹	וְפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ:
16 Certainly ⁴² you do not want a sacrifice, or else I would offer it; ⁴³	18 כִּי לֹא־תַחֲפֹץ זֶבֶח וְאַתָּנָה
you do not desire a burnt sacrifice. ⁴⁴	עֹלָה לֹא תִרְצֶה:
17 The sacrifices God desires are a humble spirit ⁴⁵ —	19 זִבְחִי אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ נְשָׁבְרָה
a humble and repentant heart ⁴⁶	לִב־נִשְׁבָּר וְנִדְכָּה
O God, ... you will not reject. ⁴⁷	אֱלֹהִים לֹא תִבְזֶה:

⁹ Most of the references to deity in this psalm are found concentrated in this stanza (vv. 13-17), as the psalmist consecrates his heart and life to God’s service.

³⁵ The initial cohortative verb expresses the psalmist's positive resolve, marking the onset of a new stanza. This may be a vow or promise. If forgiven, the psalmist will "repay" the Lord by declaring God's mercy and motivating other sinners to repent. "It should be noted that the vow here is not the usual one, in this kind of psalm, to offer a proper sacrifice, but to teach transgressors thy ways. The transgressors of verse 13a are the same as the sinners of verse 13b; they are not two different groups. 'Thy ways' refers to God's requirements, God's commands for human conduct, especially as they are expressed in the Torah" (B&R 474). We see here further progress in the psalmist's mental-spiritual move, beginning in v. 10, "from an old life of alienation to a new life of glad relationship" (B&B 238).

³⁶ *Lit.* "your ways." The word "merciful" is added for clarification. God's "ways" often refer to his moral commands, but in this context, where the teaching of God's ways motivates repentance (see the next line), it may be that God's merciful and compassionate manner of dealing with sinners is also in view. Thanksgiving songs praising God for his deliverance typically focus on these gracious divine attributes (see Pss 34, 41, 116, 138).

³⁷ Or "return," i.e., in personal repentance.

³⁸ *Lit.* "from bloodshed." "Bloodshed" here stands by metonymy for the guilt which it severe sin produces—"deadly guilt" (Tate 1990:26).

³⁹ *Lit.* "my tongue will shout for joy your righteousness." Another option is to take the prefixed verbal form as a jussive, "may my tongue shout for joy." However, the pattern in vv. 12-15 appears to be prayer/request (see vv. 12, 14a, 15a) followed by promise/vow (see vv. 13, 14b, 15b).

⁴⁰ *Lit.* "open my lips." The imperfect verbal form is used to express the psalmist's prayerful appeal.

⁴¹ *Lit.* "and my mouth will declare your praise." The chiasmic structure of this verse (Obj-V/Subj-V) accents the reciprocal divine-human action being depicted. "The psalmist's request in verse 15 is to be understood as a reference to forgiveness; while unforgiven he is unable to praise God, but if God forgives him, then he will be able to praise him" (B&R 475), as fellowship is again restored.

⁴² Or "For." The translation assumes the particle is asseverative (i.e., emphasizing: "certainly!"). (*Some translations that consider the particle asseverative leave it untranslated.*) If taken as causal or explanatory ("for", cf. NRSV), the verse would explain why the psalmist is pleading for divine forgiveness, rather than merely offering a sacrifice.

⁴³ The translation assumes that the cohortative is used in a hypothetical manner in a formally unmarked conditional sentence, "You do not want a sacrifice, should I offer [it]" (cf. NEB). For other examples of cohortatives in the protasis ("if" clause) of a conditional sentence, see GKC 320 §108.e.)... "A total rejection of sacrificial rites is not intended," but in this case, "the sin confessed is beyond ritual atonement" (Tate 1990:27-28). "In a typical way of speaking, the psalmist is not (as it might appear) saying that God wants all sacrifices to cease; he is saying that God prefers the proper penitent attitude which an offering of sacrifices should express and represent (see also Ps. 50.8-9)" (B&R 475).

NOTE: It is likely that the stanza of vv. 13-17 could be divided into two strophes at v. 16 (cf. Goldingay 2007:137), where the subject of sacrifices is highlighted by the initial כִּי.

⁴⁴ *You do not desire a burnt sacrifice.* Here the chiasmic arrangement (neg.V-Obj/Obj-neg.V) underscores completeness. The terminology used in v. 16 does not refer to expiatory sacrifices, but to dedication and communion offerings. This is not a categorical denial of the sacrificial system in general or of the importance of such offerings. The psalmist is talking here about his specific situation. Dedication and communion offerings have their proper place in worship (see v. 19), but God requires something more fundamental, a repentant and humble attitude (see v. 17), before these offerings can have real meaning. "The recurrence of reference to sacrifices in vv. 16-19 may explain the psalm's location here as an appropriate response to Ps. 50" (Goldingay 2007:125).

⁴⁵ *Lit.* "a broken spirit." As noted earlier, "In many languages it is not possible to speak of a spirit as being 'humble,' much less broken. In this context it will frequently be necessary to avoid the word spirit, which would mean a kind of inferior, nonphysical being, and say 'humble heart' (B&R 476)

⁴⁶ *Lit.* "a broken and crushed heart."

⁴⁷ Or "despise." The psalmist's rhetorical argument is that when penitents offer to God an objective brokenness of body and spirit, he has a hard time resisting such an inner offering (Goldingay 2007:138).

18 Because you favor Zion, do what is good for her! ⁴⁸	20 הִטִּיבָהּ בְּרָצוֹן אֶת־צִיּוֹן
Fortify ⁴⁹ the walls of Jerusalem!	תְּבַנֶּה חֻמּוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם:
19 Then you will accept ⁵¹ the proper sacrifices,	21 אַז תַּחֲפֹץ זִבְחֵי־צֶדֶק
burnt sacrifices and whole offerings;	עֹלָה וְכָלִיל
then bulls will be sacrificed ⁵² on your altar. ⁵³	אַז יַעֲלוּ עַל־מִזְבֵּיחַךְ פָּרִים:
<p>⁴⁸ <i>Heb</i> “do what is good for Zion in your favor.” The imperative and reference to “Zion” marks the onset of the psalm’s concluding strophe. The mention of God’s essential “favor” recalls v. 1 (<i>inclusio</i>).</p> <p>⁴⁹ Or “Build.” The imperfect verbal form is used here to express the psalmist’s wish or request. The military imagery may well be metaphorical here, implying a communal repentance on the part of the whole city—thus leading more naturally to v. 19.</p> <p>⁵¹ Or “desire, take delight in [sacrifices]”—there is a strong contrastive conceptual linkage here with v. 16, and hence the final strophe with the rest of the psalm (see ftn. 53).</p> <p>⁵² <i>Heb</i> “then they will offer up bulls.” The third plural subject is indefinite.</p>	<p>⁵³ Verses 18-19 possibly reflects the exilic period, when the city’s walls lay in ruins and the sacrificial system had been disrupted. On the other hand, where else except in the Temple city of Jerusalem could the psalmist offer the very sacrifices that he vowed to make in the preceding verses? Thus, rather than viewing vv. 18-19 as some later addition, we may well read them as a most fitting conclusion—an all-inclusive resolution, to a situation of personal abject contrition on the part of the psalmist, King David (cf. DeClaissé et. al., 2014:457).</p>

Having carefully studied Psalm 51, consider again the larger discourse structure proposed earlier,¹⁰ where “it is possible to see a movement from confession in verses 1-9 to anticipation in verses 10-19” (B&B 236)—but now in comparison with the arrangement suggested below (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:467):

“The psalm begins with a prayer for forgiveness (verses 1-2), followed by a confession of sin (verses 3-5). The psalmist prays for a restoration of fellowship with God and a spiritual renewal, ending with a promise to bring sinners back to God (verses 6-13). Then he promises to offer his praise to God and to present the kind of sacrifice that pleases God (verses 14-17). The last two verses are a prayer asking God to restore Jerusalem so that sacrifices may again be offered to him at the Temple (verses 18-19).”

To the preceding organizational formats, add the following chiastic structure:¹¹

¹⁰ The structural arrangement of p. 7 is supported by Alan Harman, *Psalms* (vol. 1), Fearn, GB: Mentor, 2011:398-405.

¹¹ David Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1999:178.

A. Grounds for requesting forgiveness: God's mercy and love (51:1-2)

B. Confession of transgressions and sins (3-5)

C. CENTER: Plea for forgiveness and restoration (6-12)

(*center of center*: "hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities!")

B' Vow to confess Yahweh's ways to transgressors and sinners and to praise God (13-15)

A' Grounds for forgiveness: not sacrifices but a broken spirit (16-17)

Addendum: (18-19, "probably added later to correct the potential impression that sacrifices are no longer necessary")

Evaluate the pros and cons of each of these three structures (plus any more that you have discovered) and then tell which one you prefer—with reasons why. How do these differences affect one's understanding of this psalm's precatory development?



([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Psalm_51#/media/File:Folio_100v - The Penance of David.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Psalm_51#/media/File:Folio_100v_-_The_Penance_of_David.jpg))

3. Exegetical Study of Psalm 51

STROPHE DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Contrite Sinner's Prayer for Pardon MT Intro For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone to Bathsheba.				
	A Prayer of Repentance	A Prayer for Healing and Moral Renewal	A Prayer for Forgiveness	A Prayer of Contrition
51:1-4	51:1-2	51:1-2	51:1-2	51:1-2
	51:3-4	51:3-5	51:3-5	51:3-4b
				51:4c-5
51:5-9	51:5-6			
		51:6-9	51:6-9	51:6-7
	51:7-9			
				51:8-9
51:10-13	51:10-11	51:10-12	51:10-13	51:10-11
	51:12-13			51:12-13
		51:13-14		
51:14-17	51:14-17		51:14-15	51:14-15
		51:15-17		
			51:16-17	51:16-17
51:18-19	51:18-19	51:18-19	51:18-19	51:18-19

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. This is one of the penitential Psalms, cf. Psalm 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; and 143. Psalm 51 may be related to Psalm 32, i.e., possibly David's sin; Psalm 32 may have been written later in David's life.

B. Although the introduction to Psalm 51 in the MT is a later addition, it may accurately reflect the subject matter of this Psalm. For a fuller understanding of the background read 2 Samuel 11 and 12.

C. David, as King of Israel, was God's official representative among His people. He betrayed this sacred trust. He does not call God "YHWH" in this Psalm (but this is characteristic of Book II of the Psalms). However, he calls upon God's unchanging character of love and mercy (cf. Mal. 3:6) as he throws himself, without excuse, in God's hands.

There was no OT sacrifice for intentional, premeditated sin (cf. Lev. 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 22:14).

1. lusted after another's wife
2. forced her to commit adultery
3. lied to her husband who was a royal soldier
4. had others (i.e., Israeli military duplicity) murder him
5. tried to cover the entire thing up instead of repenting

D. Notice how many different expressions are used to denote "forgiveness."

1. blot out — Ps. 51:1, 9
2. wash — Ps. 51:2,9
3. cleanse — Ps. 51:2
4. purify — Ps. 51:7
5. hide Your face — Ps. 51:9
6. deliver — Ps. 51:14

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY: NASB (UPDATED) TEXT:

PSALM 51:1-4

¹Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
And cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak
And blameless when You judge.

51:1-2 Notice the literary flow of this strophe, which deals with a believer's confession of known sin. There are four (possibly five, *Qere*) imperatives of request.

1. be gracious to me — BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* imperative; this is a recurrent prayer request (cf. Ps. 4:1; 6:2; 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10; 31:9; 41:4,10; 56:1; 57:1 [twice] etc.) to a gracious God (BDB 337, cf. Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 116:5; 145:8; see Ps. 9:10b)

a. according to Your lovingkindness (BDB 338, see Ps. 5:7)

b. according to the greatness of Your compassion (i.e., construct BDB 913 and BDB 933, cf. Ps. 25:6; 69:16; 119:156; 145:9)

2. blot out my transgressions — BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* imperative, cf. Ps. 51:9, usually this word is used of destroying sinners (cf. Ps. 9:5; 69:28; 109:13) from life and the book of life (cf. Exod. 32:32-33; see at Ps. 9:5)

This concept of "experienced" forgiveness and restoration to divine fellowship is also found in the NT, esp. Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:7,9.

The same three nouns for "sin" also are found in Exod. 34:7. Interestingly the verb "blot out" is found in Exod. 32:32-33. Maybe the psalmist had the book of Exodus in mind.

The verb is also found in Isa. 43:25; 44:22. It asserts the great truth that when God forgives, God forgets—note Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19. Several different metaphors are used but all suggest "out of sight, out of mind."

In the ANE ink was acidic. When one wrote on a papyrus page the ink bit into the plant material and could not be erased. To erase something was a miracle of God, just like washing a dyed cloth white (cf. Isa. 1:18) was also impossible (i.e., no bleach available). Forgiveness is a miracle of God!

3. wash me — BDB 460, KB 459, *Piel* imperative, only here in the Psalms and *Piel* imperfect in Ps. 51:7; used predominately in Leviticus for ritual purification
4. "thoroughly" (MT has a *Hiphil* infinitive absolute, but the Masoretic Jewish scholars suggested a changes to another imperative) — BDB 915, KB 1176, *Hiphil* imperative
5. cleanse me — BDB 372, KB 369, *Piel* imperative, only here in the Psalms, and *Qal* imperfect in Ps. 51:7; used predominately in Leviticus for something pronounced clean.

51:1 "transgressions" There are several terms for human rebellion against God found in this strophe.

1. transgression, 51:1,3 — BDB 833, cf. Isa. 59:12-13; Amos 5:12; Micah 1:5 (twice),13; its basic meaning is to revolt or rebel against God
2. iniquity, Ps. 51:2,5,9 — BDB 730, cf. Ps. 32:5 (thrice), used often in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel
3. sin, Ps. 51:2,9,13 — BDB 308, cf Ps. 32:5 (twice), its basic meaning is to "miss"; the basic root is often used of a "sin offering"
4. evil, Ps. 51:4 — BDB 948 II, very common word, cf. Ps. 5:4; 7:4,9; 10:6,15; 23:4; 34:13,14,16; 36:4; 37:27; 41:5; 49:5; 52:3; 54:5, etc.

One can tell how important a concept is to a culture/language by how many terms are used to communicate or clarify the concept. Hebrew has many words for sin/rebellion against God.

▣ "sin" This feminine noun (BDB 308) is found in Ps. 51: 2,3,9,13. The masculine noun (BDB 307) is in Ps. 51:5,9. The verb (BDB 306, KB 305) is in Ps. 51:4,7.

51:3-4 These verses reveal the inner consequences of sin and its terrible disruption of fellowship with God.

1. "I know my transgressions" — They are not sins of ignorance but of open rebellion.
2. "My sin is ever before me" — Guilt cannot be relieved or minimized. It is a constant reminder of the broken fellowship and its consequences.
3. "Against You, You only, I have sinned" — This is a theological statement (cf. Gen. 20:6; 2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 41:4). Sin is known only when human action is put up against a divine command (cf. Rom. 3:20,25; 4:15; 5:13,20; Acts 17:30).

This is not to depreciate the pain of victims but to note that ultimately all sin is against the one and only Holy God!

51:4c-d The TEV catches the meaning of these two lines of poetry.

"So you are right in judging me; you are justified in condemning me."

This is quoted by Paul from the LXX in Rom. 3:4. It is introduced by "let God be found true, though every man be found a liar."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: PSALM 51:5-9

⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
⁶Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.
⁷Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.
⁹Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.

51:5 This verse may go with verses 1-4. It is not an excuse but the terrible reality of the fallen human condition (cf. Gen. 8:21; 1 Kgs. 8:46; Job 14:1-4; 15:14; 25:4; Ps. 58:3; Pro. 20:9; Isa. 48:8; Rom. 3:9-18,23; Eph. 2:3; all express the reality of the fall of mankind in Genesis 3. It is true that most rabbis emphasized the origin of sin as Genesis 6. The Apostle Paul is the NT author who focuses on Genesis 3 as the source of sin and its consequences).

We are sinners in Adam/Eve (cf. Rom. 5:12-21) and also we choose to sin. Both are true!

51:6-9 The psalmist is asking God to restore him to his previous place/state of fellowship. He has acknowledged his sin (51:3-4) and asked for forgiveness (51:1-2). This strophe repeats these.

1. acknowledge his sins

a. v. 5

b. two imperatives

(1) "hide Your face from my sins" — BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* imperative

(2) "blot out all my iniquities" — same as Ps. 51:1 (the "book of God" is also mentioned in Ps. 139:16, see note on "secret" below)

2. desires forgiveness

- a. God desires "truth in the innermost being" (BDB 711, note the use of "secret" [BDB 712] in Ps. 139:15)
- b. God, please make that truth known!
- c. prayer requests (6 imperfects)

- (1) purify me — BDB 306, KB 305, *Piel* imperfect
- (2) I shall be clean — BDB 372, KB 369, *Qal* imperfect (i.e., result of being purified)
- (3) wash me — BDB 460, KB 459, *Piel* imperfect
- (4) I shall be whiter than snow — BDB 526, KB 517, *Hiphil* imperfect (i.e., result of being washed, cf. Isa. 1:18)
- (5) make me to hear joy (BDB 965) and gladness (BDB 970) — BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* imperfect
- (6) let the bones. . .rejoice — BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* imperfect ("broken bones" were an OT idiom of divine judgment, cf. Isa. 38:13; Lam. 3:4)

The psalmist deeply desires that the intimate fellowship he had known with God, which was damaged by his sin, be restored by God's grace and mercy.

51:6 "desires" This verb (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* perfect) is used in verse 6 of that which God "desires" (i.e., truth in the innermost being) and in Ps. 51:16 of that which He does not desire (*Qal* imperfect, i.e., perfunctory sacrifices or sacrifices for intentional sins).

51:7 "hyssop" The small desert plant (BDB 23) was used in a bunch to sprinkle liquids for ritualistic ceremonies.

- 1. blood of the Passover lamb on the doorpost of homes — Exod. 12:21-22
- 2. ceremony for cleansing of the leper — Lev. 14:4,6 (for leprous buildings, Lev. 14:19,51,52)
- 3. in connection to the ritual of burning the Red Heifer (i.e., ashes of purification) — Num. 19:6,18
- 4. in connection with Moses sprinkling the book of the law — Heb. 9:19, cf. Exod. 24:6-8

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: **PSALM 51:10-13**

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
¹¹Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.

¹³*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

51:10-13 This strophe also has several prayer requests (imperatives, jussives) which call for a personal faith renewal. This must be brought about by the sovereign acts of God, but the psalmist must present himself for it to be done.

1. create in me a clean heart — BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* imperative, cf. Ezek. 36:26-27; he desires a miracle or recreation (*bara* used only of God, Gen. 1:1)
2. renew a steadfast spirit within me — BDB 293, KB 293, *Piel* imperative, cf. Ps. 78:37
3. do not cast me away from Your presence — BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* imperfect used in a jussive sense, cf. 2 Kgs. 13:23 and negative in 2 Kgs. 24:20; Jer. 7:15
4. do not take Your Holy Spirit from me — BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* imperfect used in a jussive sense, cf. Isa. 63:10,11; Ezek. 36:26-27
5. restore to me the joy of Your salvation — BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* imperative
6. sustain me with a willing spirit — BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* imperfect used in a jussive sense to match #3,4

Notice the emphasis on the internal, personal aspect of faith (i.e., Isa. 26:9). The result of this spiritual renewal will be

1. I will teach transgressors Your ways — BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* cohortative; note the fellowship and knowledge of God must come first, cf. Ezra 7:10
2. sinners will be converted (lit. "turn back") — same verb as 51:12a, "to restore," but *Qal* imperfect

51:10 "heart" See at Ps. 4:7. Mankind's unique creation in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) and personally "fashioned/formed" by God (Gen. 2:7), makes him a

1. physical creature, like the other animals on this planet (cf. *nephesh*)
2. spiritual creature, uniquely suited for fellowship with God; this spiritual aspect goes by several metaphors/analogies/terms:
 - a. heart, i.e., Ps. 36:1; 39:3; 55:4; 109:22
 - b. kidneys/bowels, i.e., Ps. 22:14; Jer. 4:19; 31:20; Lam. 1:20; 2:11
 - c. spirit, i.e., Isa. 57:16; Zech. 12:1
 - d. thoughts, Ps. 94:19

▣ "spirit" The term (BDB 924) is used several times in this Psalm.

1. "a steadfast spirit," 51:10

2. "Your Holy Spirit," 51:11
3. "a willing spirit, 51:12
4. "a broken spirit, 51:17

51:11b Many commentators believe this line of poetry is a reference to 1 Sam. 11:6; 16:14; 18:12, where Saul initially had the Spirit but after his repeated sins, the Spirit left him and went to David.

▣ "Your Holy Spirit" In most of the OT, the "Spirit" is a force of God (i.e., Gen. 1:2), not a distinct person (but note Isa. 63:10-11). However, this concept of the personhood of the Spirit is developed in the NT.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: **PSALM 51:14-17**

¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;

Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.

¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,

That my mouth may declare Your praise.

¹⁶For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;

You are not pleased with burnt offering.

¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

51:14-17 This strophe continues the thought of:

1. deliver — BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* imperative, the psalmist was sinful and needed to be forgiven. Verse 14 may link to David's murder of Uriah (lit. "bloods," BDB 196, assumed to refer to "bloodguiltiness," that is, "murder of an innocent person").

2. the "teach transgressors" (BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* cohortative) of Ps. 51:13a is explained/defined

a. my tongue will joyfully sing (David was a singer) of Your righteousness (this key term [BDB 842] basically means a standard, ruler, straight edge. All the words for "sin" are a deviation from the standard; in this context it has the connotation of "vindication" or "just actions," cf. Ps. 71:2,15; see at Ps. 1:5).

(1) open my lips

(2) my mouth may declare Your praise



(<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/468444798720244874/>)

The new thought is begun in Ps. 51:16-17. There was no sacrifice listed in Leviticus 1-7 that dealt with intentional, premeditated sin (cf. Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15-18; 22:14; Num. 15:27-28). If there were he would give it (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* cohortative), but there was not, so he threw himself on the mercy of God. He trusted/believed that God would not reject (both *Niphal* participles)

1. a broken heart over sin (BDB 990, cf. Ps. 34:19; Isa. 61:1; Jer. 23:9)

2. a contrite heart (lit. "crushed, BDB 194, cf. Isa. 57:15)

This refers to a Rom. 12:1-2 kind of worshiper. Repentance has an effect on God (cf. Ps. 34:18)! 51:15

NASB (1970)"Lord"

NASB (1995)"Lord"

The MT has *Adon*, not YHWH. The covenant name for Israel's God is not found in Book II of the Psalter as frequently as in Book I. Some scholars speculate that the compiler of Book II changed many of the references of YHWH to *Elohim*.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: **PSALM 51:18-19**

¹⁸By Your favor do good to Zion;

Build the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁹Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices,

In burnt offering and whole burnt offering;

Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

51:18-19 The Psalm closes with a seemingly separate thought. There is an unexpected switch from an individual to a national prayer for God's blessing ("do good," BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* imperative) on Jerusalem. The prayer implies that Jerusalem had problems.

1. build her walls
2. restore her sacrificial system

Many commentators have used verse 16 to depreciate sacrifice, but because of Ps. 51:23, it is best to see it as emphasizing the difference between "intentional" and "unintentional" sin. Also notice that at no time would these two verses fit David's life. There is no MSS evidence they were added after the compositions or compilation of the Psalm.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. The psalmist gives two reasons for God to be gracious to him. What are they and why are they significant?
2. List the different words used to describe forgiveness in this Psalm.
3. Explain verse 4 in your own words.
4. What does verse 5 mean in an OT setting?
5. Does God take the Holy Spirit away from sinners?
6. Explain verses 16-17's relationship to verse 19. Explain the difference between an "intentional sin" and an "unintentional sin" in relation to the sacrificial system.
7. How are verses 18-19 related to the rest of the Psalm?

(This study was prepared by Bob Utley at <https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-51>)

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4. A Devotional Study of Psalm 51

Our brothers and sisters in the faith before us have provided two important keys for unlocking this psalm.

First, there is the heading that says, "A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba." Supplied by the editors of the Book of Psalms, these headings often point the way to interpreting and applying the psalm. In this case, the heading is saying, "Imagine this as the sort of prayer that David prayed after being convicted of his sins by the prophet Nathan" (2 Samuel 11 and 12). We begin by recalling that story.

The story begins innocently enough: "In the spring of the year, the time when kings go forth to battle..." (2 Samuel 11:1). But this time the king is staying home. The one time slingshotting, swashbuckling, songwriting soldier is sitting this one out.

And then late one afternoon it happens. The old warrior is bored with the soaps and talk shows and takes a stroll out onto the veranda. But wait a minute! He notices a woman, a "very beautiful woman" says the Hebrew text, taking a dip in the pool next door.

Then the former man of action goes into action. A couple of calls gives him the woman's name and reveals that her husband is away with the army. The king sends for Bathsheba and she comes to the palace. They have a few gin and tonics. They make love. Then she goes home, and that's that.

A few months later, there's a message for the king. David opens the envelope and reads it. Two words in Hebrew: *harah anoki*. "I'm pregnant. Bathsheba" Again, the king acts. To account for the pregnancy he brings her husband back from the front. "Go home and sleep with your lovely wife," he says to him, slipping the soldier a bottle from the royal wine cellar. But Uriah refuses the offer and instead sleeps with the servants out on the lovely lawn.

The plot thickens and the story sickens. The king orders General Joab to put Uriah where the fighting is heaviest. Word comes that Uriah has been killed in action. The king does a magnanimous thing. He marries this broken-hearted war widow.

End of the story? Not quite. One day the prophet Nathan shows up at the palace. He tells the king about a rich man who has stolen a poor man's only lamb and slaughtered it for dinner. The king is enraged. "What? Who is this guy? Tell me, and we'll royally nail him!"

"You're the guy!" says Nathan. David is devastated. And this psalm, says our heading, is the sort of prayer that fits such a situation. When there's big time trouble, you call in Psalm 51.

In verses 1 -- 5, the psalm begins with a cry for forgiveness, emphasizing the urgency of the situation with a series of imperative verbs: have mercy, blot out, wash, and cleanse. The picture behind the Hebrew word translated "transgressions" in verses 1, 3, and 13, is one of rebellion, as when children rebel against parents (see also Isaiah 1:2). The literal sense of the Hebrew translated "iniquity" (verses 2, 9) is "to be bent out of shape." For example, in Psalm 38:6, the *Jewish Publication Society Bible* gives the translation "I am all bent." The word translated "sin" (Hebrew *hata'* in verses 2, 3, 4, 9) or "sinner" (5 and 13) in non-theological contexts means "to miss the target." Judges 20:16 tells of 700 left-handed sling-shotters who could "sling a stone at a hair and not miss (*hata'*)."

Balancing these words for sin are three Hebrew picture-words for forgiveness. The Hebrew translated "blot out" in verse 1 is also used to "wipe" a dirty dish (2 Kings 21:13). To "wash" in verses 2 and 7 could better be translated "scrub," as one scrubs dirty clothes (Exodus 19:10, 14). "Cleanse" in verse 2 and "be clean" in verse 7 is the same word used for washing clothes in a river (Leviticus 13:6, 34, 58).

Verses 6 -- 12 offer another request for forgiveness. The verb "create" (verse 10) in the Hebrew Bible always has God as its subject, and the result of the activity is always something entirely new (see Genesis 1, for example). The psalmist is praying for a brand new beginning, a fresh start, a new, clean spirit.

In verses 13 -- 17, the one praying looks forward to being happy and right with God once again (verses 8, 11-12). Once he/she experiences the joy of being forgiven, he/she vows to witness and teach others about it and sing and praise God (verses 13-15). In verses 16 and 17 the psalmist says, "The sort of sacrifice the Lord desires is not something I bring as an offering. Rather, the Lord wants me, broken spirit, broken heart and all" (see also Micah 6:6-8).

Toward Counseling and Preaching: What Can You Do With a Broken Heart?

Every pastor knows that this is one of those psalms that can reach into the depths of a difficult situation. I recall a college student telling me about the sad breakup with his girlfriend. I suggested that he read through some of the psalms. The next week he showed up, bringing his Bible, with passages from the psalms marked in red. "These words were speaking right to me!" he said. Among the texts marked was Psalm 51: 17 about the broken heart.

I also remember listening as a man related an incredible story of his unfaithfulness and adultery. When we prayed together, it was Psalm 51 that I reached for.

Lastly, the second interpretive key from church tradition is the fact that this prayer, "Create in me a clean heart" from Psalm 51, has long been a part of the church's weekly worship. For example, in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, four hymn settings of verses 10-12 are available as options for each of ten worship settings (see ELW pages 106, 128 and hymns 185-188).

Thus Psalm 51 is a prayer for individuals in distress, but it is also a prayer for the community on Ash Wednesday and for the worship of God's People each week.

(by Prof. James Limburg at: https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=478)

Finally, a word about Psalm 51 from Martin Luther (*Selected Psalms*, 1:305, 320):
“A knowledge of this psalm is necessary and useful in many ways. It contains instruction about the chief parts of our religion—about repentance, sin, grace, and justification, as well as about the worship we ought to render to God. These are divine and heavenly doctrines. Unless they are taught by the great Spirit, they cannot enter the heart of man. ... Our whole life is enclosed and established in the [heart] and mercy of God.”

5. The *MISERE*

Miserere (full title: ***Miserere mei, Deus***, Latin for "Have mercy on me, O God") is a setting of Psalm 51 (50) by Italian composer Gregorio Allegri. It was composed during the reign of Pope Urban VIII, probably during the 1630s, for use in the Sistine Chapel during matins, as part of the exclusive Tenebrae service on Holy Wednesday and Good Friday of Holy Week. The *Miserere* is written for two choirs, one of five and one of four voices, and is an example of Renaissance polyphony.

One of the choirs sings a simple version of the original *Miserere* chant; the other, spatially separated, sings an ornamented commentary on this. The Tenebrae service where the *Miserere* would be sung normally began at dusk, hence the name (*tenebrae* is Latin for "shadows" or "darkness"). During the ritual, candles would be extinguished one by one, save for the last candle which remained alight and was then hidden. Gregorio Allegri envisioned the setting of the *Miserere* to be the final act within the first lesson of the Tenebrae service. The *Miserere* is one of the most frequently recorded pieces of late Renaissance music.

The original translation of the psalm used for the piece was in Latin:

Miserere mei, Deus

*Miserere mei, Deus: secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.
Et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meam.
Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea: et a peccato meo munda me.
Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco: et peccatum meum contra me est semper.
Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci: ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas cum judicaris.
Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum: et in peccatis concepit me mater mea.
Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti: incerta et occulta sapientiae tuae manifestasti mihi.
Asperges me hysopo, et mundabor: lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.
Auditui meo dabis gaudium et laetitiam: et exsultabunt ossa humiliata.
Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis: et omnes iniquitates meas dele.
Cor mundum crea in me, Deus: et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.*

*Ne proicias me a facie tua: et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me.
 Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui: et spiritu principali confirma me.
 Docebo iniquos vias tuas: et impii ad te convertentur.
 Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meae: et exultabit lingua mea iustitiam tuam.
 Domine, labia mea aperies: et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam.
 Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem utique: holocaustis non delectaberis.
 Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus: cor contritum, et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies.
 Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion: ut aedificentur muri Ierusalem.
 Tunc acceptabis sacrificium iustitiae, oblationes, et holocausta: tunc imponent super altare tuum vitulos.*

English translation

This translation is from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and is used in Ivor Atkins' English edition of the *Miserere* (published by Novello):

Have mercy upon me, O God

Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness
 According to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences.
 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin.
 For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me.
 Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified in Thy saying, and clear when Thou art judged.
 Behold, I was shapen in wickedness: and in sin hath my mother conceived me.
 But lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts: and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.
 Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
 Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness: that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.
 Turn Thy face from my sins: and put out all my misdeeds.
 Make me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me.
 Cast me not away from Thy presence: and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
 O give me the comfort of Thy help again: and stablish me with Thy free Spirit.
 Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked: and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.
 Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou that art the God of my health: and my tongue shall sing of Thy righteousness.
 Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord: and my mouth shall shew [show] Thy praise.
 For Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee: but Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings.
 The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise.
 O be favourable and gracious unto Sion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.
 Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations: then shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine altar.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miserere_\(Allegri\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miserere_(Allegri)))

A meditation of a sinner

A Meditation of a penitent sinner, vpon the 51. Psalme.

Haue mer-
cie vpon
me (o God)
after thy
great merci

Hae mercy, God, for thy great mercies sake,
O God: my God, vnto my shame I say,
Beyng fled from thee, so as I dyed to take
Thy name in wretched mouth, and feare to pray

Make the mercy that I haue abused.
But, God of mercy, let me come to thee:
Not for iustice, that iustly am accus'd:
Which selfe word Iustice so amaleth me,
That scarce I dare thy mercy sound againe.
But mercie, Lord, yet suffer me to craue.
Mercie is thine: Let me not crye in vaine,
Thy great mercie for my great fault to haue.
Haue mercie, God, pittie my penitence
With greater mercie than my great offence.

And ac-
cording
vnto the
multitude
of thy mer-

My many sinnes in number are encrease,
With weight wherof in sea of depe despaire
My sinking soule is now so sore opprest,
That now in perill and in present fere,
I crye: susteine me, Lord, and Lord I pray,
With endlesse number of thy mercies take
The endlesse number of my sinnes away.

So

vpon the 51. Psalme

So by thy mercie, for thy mercies sake,
Reue on me, Lord, reue me with thy grace.
My sinne is cause that I so neede to haue
Thy mercies ayde in my so woefull case:
My sinne is cause that scarce I dare to craue
Thy mercie manyfold, whiche onely may
Reue me my soule, and take my sinnes away.

ries do a-
way myne
offences.

So foule is sinne and lothesome in thy sighte,
So foule with sinne I see my selfe to be,
That tull from sinne I may be washed white,
So foule I dare not, Lord, approche to thee.
Yet hath thy mercie washed me before,
Thou madest me cleane: but I am foule againe.
Yet washe me Lord againe, and washe me more.
Washe me, O Lord, and do away the staine
Of my sinnes that in my soule appere.
Let flow thy pletuous streames of cleansing grace,
Washe me againe, yea washe me euery where,
Bothe leproous bodie and defiled face.
Yea washe me all, for I am all vncleane,
And from my sin, Lord, cleanse me ones againe.

Wash me
yet more
from my
wickednes,
and cleanse
me from
my sinne.

Haue mercie, Lord, haue mercie: for I know
How much I neede thy mercie in this case.
The horroz of my guilt doth dayly growe,
And growing weares my feeble hope of grace.
I fele and suffer in my thrall'd brest
Secret remorse and gnawing of my hart.
I fele my sinne, my sinne that hath opprest
My soule with sorrow and surmounting smart.
Draue me to mercie: for so oft as I

For I know
ledge my
wickednes,
and my
sinne is e-
uer before
me.

Presume

(Several of the sonnets from Anne Locke's A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner, though this edition does not credit her. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1560_Locke_Meditations.jpg)

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