

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 22, Hebrew Poetry, Psalms, Genres

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Well, good morning. The peace of Christ be with you. Seems like student life is taking a toll these days.

We're missing about 10, between 10 and 12 people, but here comes one more. Bless you. At any rate, here are the announcements.

Those of you doing extra credit, stuff needs to be turned in today. No exceptions, no extensions, whatever you want to call it. I've already gotten four or five of them, and that's just great.

Thank you for doing them, and those of you who are engaged in that project, keep up the work. It'll serve you well, I'm sure. Some questions have been raised about how to find commentaries for the paper. Now, I know your minds are primarily on the exam, which is Wednesday, but let me just make a couple of comments in this regard for those of you who have not had a chance to make your way into the reference section of the library.

If you've read the paper assignment carefully, you know that it says, please don't use Matthew Henry, which is easily accessible online but doesn't have the kind of stuff we're looking for here. Instead, as you walk into the library, particularly the reference room—I'm trusting you know which one that is—go past the circulation desk, turn left, and there it is over there. Go past Randy Gawman's desk.

He's the one who sits right there inside the reference room and kind of heads off to the right. All right, don't go left; go to the right, and in those first couple of rows, they shift these around now and then, so I'm not sure whether it's in the second or the third row, but in the first couple of rows, you're going to find a shelf after shelf after shelf of commentaries, both Old Testament and New Testament commentaries. All of the ones that I have listed on the backside of the assignment sheet are in those series, so that's the place to start.

One of the reasons it's the place to start is because it's reference room material, and that means it never goes out of the reference room, so you can't say, oh, I couldn't find anything. It may not be on the shelf, because you may have to go to that resshelf cart, because my guess is that there's going to be more than one person using these same resources at the same time. But make your way around.

Look around the cart, look around the tables, and share the resources. There will be plenty of stuff there for you to work with as you work on your paper. So again, just to

help those of you who haven't had a chance to really discover where commentaries are located in the library.

With regard to the exam, the review session tonight and tomorrow would really be good to take advantage of if you hadn't been doing that on a regular basis. I have to make a little bit of a tweak in terms of starting time, ending time for Wednesday. Because I have a meeting I need to go to pretty shortly after this class is over, we're going to need to stop by 1020.

Now, because that's true, and because there are those who are coming from an eight o'clock class, it wouldn't really be fair to let some of you start a quarter of nine and have a full hour and a half and others only have maybe an hour itself. So the window is going to be this time, starting at nine. You can start as early as nine.

In other words, race right over here after your class if you've got an eight o'clock class. And then you can go as late as 10:20, but I do have to leave by that time. If you're one of these people who absolutely, absolutely needs more time, and you know that, make the arrangements today to go up and take it in the Academic Support Center, and then let me know today so that I can be aware that that's going to happen.

So, there are ways of accommodating it if time just causes all sorts of undue stress for you, but you need to take advantage of that by arranging for it today. Do you have any questions about that? The rest of the policies are pretty much the same. As you know, there's a map on this exam this time around, and there will also be an essay question on Saul.

Any questions on any of this stuff? Well, you know, we're going to do psalms today. Unity of believers sitting together.

Let's pray.

Father, as we address you this morning, we're thankful to be your children. We're thankful for the love and the forbearance and the faithfulness and the protection that you give us as your children. And 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 earnestly pray that the things that we learn together would be things that you would use to shape us into people who are lights and beacons in a dark world. As we study the psalms together today, Lord, help us to appreciate yet another avenue of your revelation to us in our ways of expressing our joy, our hopes, our fears, and our anxieties and anguish to you.

So, we thank you for these as well. Bless this time, we pray, in Christ's name, with thanksgiving. Amen.

Well, we are indeed going to pick up in general on poetic literature. I'm 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 that we've just been studying David, and although David hasn't written all the psalms according to the psalm titles, and I'll say more about those in a moment, he did write about half of them, more than 70.

So, this is a good time to take a break. We've been sort of, you know, trying to deal with names and events, and now it's just a 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'll say, of David, and then go on and perhaps describe some circumstances and some musical notes—having a little trouble here. Let's see what is coming up next.

Let's try it this way. Ah, yes, here we go. So, how much poetry is in the First Testament? Ballpark? Does anybody want to guess? Half? Quarter? Two-thirds? Sarah? Yeah, it's about a third, which is interesting, isn't it? If we're going to think of that whole body of literature that we've got in what we're calling the Old or the First Testament, a third of it is in poetic expression.

You know, I'm sure that some of you like poetry, but probably you're not used to having a third of what you take in on a daily basis or a weekly basis be poetry because that's 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, 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 ask a little question first. Why is poetry, you know, think of the poetry you like even in our culture, which has some differences between it and Hebrew poetry, but why is poetry such a great way to express what you want to express from God's perspective to express truth? Not a rhetorical question, Susanna. I'll say the enjoyment of words, and particularly choices of words, in poetry, usually Hebrew poetry, you have fewer words, and yet they're very carefully chosen, aren't they? And we'll come back to that, Ginger.

So, you've raised an interesting issue here. Susanna has said specific word choices, and you're saying, I think, ambiguous or potentially ambiguous expressions so that

people have to ask you about the meaning of it. Alright, both of those might work quite nicely, and we'll do a little more with that, I hope.

Mary? Yeah, using very, sometimes visual or visceral imagery, right, to get these truths across, and therefore, we're going to relate to in a particular way because of the kinds of imagery that show up, and that goes right along with what's been said already. Oftentimes, the words that are used to express truth in poetry are unusual, and they're going to draw on some pictures that we normally might not pick up on. Anything else? Sarah? What makes it easier to memorize? Okay, but what about the poetry makes it easier to memorize? I'm sorry, I asked my question the wrong way.

Okay, certainly true in Western poetry, isn't it? Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da, da-de-de-da-da-da-da-da-da, the rhythm sort of helps us figure out, oh yeah, what word went in there? Zach? Yeah, the parallelism that we're going to talk about in a moment is going to be a major factor in terms of conveying truth, and I would suggest memorizing it. Although sometimes when we try to memorize, or at least I shouldn't accuse you of this, but sometimes when I try and memorize Psalms, for example, or Proverbs, I get a little mixed up in terms of order of things because sometimes there's the same thought being expressed in different words and you're thinking, okay, did that come first or did the other thing come first? But you're right, and the parallelism is going to be a big deal here. Well, here are just a couple of things that you've already said.

The visual imagery, and we're going to talk more about it, and give a couple of illustrations in a moment. But when you have mountains smoking and animals leaping and those kinds of things, they're memorable, and they make an impression on us as well. So, they raise our level of sensitivity to spiritual truths.

We'll see some illustrations of this as we look at some examples of Psalms particularly, and then it is easier to memorize than a historical narrative. Try memorizing historical narrative sometime. It's a little bit difficult.

But when you draw on poetry, it comes a little more easily, and it doesn't necessarily have to have the rhyme and the rhythm, although that certainly helps, as we're going to see in a moment. Here's an example. Perfect for our Lenten season, I would suggest, too.

Of course, one stands out of a very beloved hymn. But just think about it for a moment. We'll talk about the rhyme and rhythm a little later on.

But look at the imagery. The survey is a different word than look at. There's something embedded in survey that gives us getting a whole look at it, if you will, that's part of the implicit meaning of survey.

Then cross isn't just cross, but it's wondrous. Fortunately, this doesn't say awesome because we have abused the word awesome in the last 15 years terribly, and it doesn't have the meaning that it should have. But wondrous still does.

There's something beyond when we use the term wondrous. Of course, instead of simply saying Jesus, although that would be perfectly appropriate, we should say Prince of Glory and all the real meaning that's implicit in glory. Glory is a visible manifestation of God's radiance, his absolute radiance.

So, when you think of glory, then you're thinking of that, and here Jesus is Prince of Glory. Then, of course, my richest gain encompasses anything that you and I might think of as the utmost of our human, generally very self-centered aspirations. As Paul says, those are nothing.

They're trash, they're garbage. I count but lose. Then I like the last line, pouring contempt.

What a wonderful way of saying I've got to do an utter reversal of the way I've been thinking about my life. Instead of being self-serving and self-striving, I need to just pour contempt, overwhelm 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 a sense of some very profound theology in the poetic form.

Very profound theology. Then here's the other thing, it has rhyme and rhythm to it. Now, that's one thing that we're 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, but there's the use of sounds in Hebrew poetry, but not to the extent that we use it in classic Western poetry. So, let's look at some of the characteristics of Hebrew poetry. Again, I'm thinking at large at this point, so that we're going to apply it not only to Psalms, but we're going to apply these ideas to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, part of it, Job, etc, etc.

As a matter of fact, 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. It's almost conceptual rhythm, if you will, as opposed to sound rhythm. This is a conceptual rhythm.

So, balance, symmetry, and ideas bring up what Zach has said about our profoundly important concept of parallelism. Now, when we're talking about parallelisms, no

matter which kind we're going to talk about, and we'll 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 readdressed in the second line. It might be restated with synonyms, which is synonymous parallelism. It might be addressed in terms of, here's one line, but here's the antithesis of it.

Here's another way for us to think about it 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 a little bit more, and then build on it a little bit more, which is now, as you can see, I've just given those three definitions or descriptions of those three. Let's look at, if you've got your text, these examples that I have pulled out for you.

By the way, it's important to note, not a bullet, yeah, bullet number four. These forms are not just simply shot at you like that. They're interrelated, 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'll 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 are two different ways of saying something that has binding.

Of course, break and throw off. In verse 4, the one enthroned in heaven laughs, and the Lord scoffs at them. This is sort of a shocking idea for those of us who like to make God nice all the time.

He laughs at wicked people and scoffs at them, a synonym for parallelism. Then, in verse 5, he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath. Notice that each of these second lines hammers home the point of the first line.

And so, there we have, in a very simple form, some examples of synonymous parallelism. If you back up just one psalm, I've tried to keep these somewhat in the same place so that we can look at them fairly easily. The last line of Psalm 1, verse 6, is a classic case of antithetical parallelism.

Now, what it's doing is that last verse summarizes the bigger statements that have gone before, which we're 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. But now, here comes our summary statement.

The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. So those who are righteous on the one hand, preserved by God, those who are wicked, their way's going to perish. Antithetical parallelism.

We see antithetical parallelisms 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're going to see one after another after another of antithetical parallelisms.

And what it's designed to do, I would suggest, is to teach the person who's studying, because Proverbs is all about learning, learning about life, teach that person to distinguish between what's good on the one hand and what's not on the other. So, you have these polarities being expressed. The way of the righteous, the way of the wicked, truth, falsehood, joy, despair.

Those are the kinds of things that show up there. All right, so those are antithetical. Synthetic parallelism is exemplified quite nicely in the first part of Psalm 1. And let me read that for you.

Again, think of each line adding a little bit more of a perspective to the topic. Blessed is the person. Well, what about him or her? Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers.

So we've got a growing view here. In other words, every aspect of that person's life is staying away from those things that are problematic. But his delight is in the law of the Lord.

And on his law, he meditates day and night. He's like a tree planted by streams of water, yields its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

You're getting the whole picture. There's a simile in there, like a tree. There are all these things that are added to describe this person.

And then of course, the next two verses, four and five, not so the wicked. Two big antitheses. First, the righteous on the one hand, then the wicked on the other.

And then, as I said earlier, verse six 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 to you, very powerful means of expressing truth.

First of all, for all the reasons we've already said with regard to the value of poetry, but even more so, and that gets us 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 it 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 our minds are such that we need repetition in order really to learn and to absorb what's going on, if I only say something once in this class, I know from experience that it's usually missed. And that's not, I'm not making derogatory comments about you, I'm just saying there's so much the mind can take and absorb and retain.

But if it's said multiple times, for example, if I've said to you, hey, you know, it'd really be a good idea to learn those Philistine cities for the exam. I've said that now, I think, three or four times and just now as well. This is registering, isn't it? And you're thinking, I bet they're 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, gets boring, and that can turn somebody off. But using synonyms, you know, different words, but they're getting across the same idea.

And your mind processes it a little bit better. So, it's a marvelous way of really driving home truth, whether it's synonymous or antithetical parallelisms. And antitheticals, we're forced to kind of 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 that representing something from one language accurately in another language is no mean task. Think how difficult it is then to not only take the 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 and then, there are hymns that have been translated from German chorales.

The people who have translated those have been absolutely brilliant because they've managed to maintain the basic meaning and convey that meaning from German into English, as well as have rhyme and rhythm that fits the music. And it's a challenge. And if you go back and look at some of the German, it's not exactly always the same as the English translation because there's 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 parallelisms. 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 niceties of sound that we have in some kinds of poetic expression as their main features.

Does that make sense to you? It should cause shivers to go up and down the back of your spine. Well, that's the back. Up and down your spine, all right? Because it is something that is profoundly unique if you will.

Well, it's not unique. 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.

All right, have I made enough of a point of that so that you've gotten it? It hasn't been nice parallelism, but I've tried to say it a few ways. It's significant. Do you have any questions on that before we go on? We want to say a few more things about Hebrew poetry.

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 reference a little bit later on. But as you know, personification is giving human attributes to abstract qualities or concepts. All right, that's what's happening here.

Human or animal. Maybe I should say animal qualities as well. So, we've got the sea looking and fleeing.

Seas normally don't do that. The sea looked and fled. Jordan turned back.

The mountains skipped like rams. And the hills like lambs in Psalm 114. All right? Now, that's an amazing statement.

And you got to use your imagination a little bit to figure out, this is really astonishing. What must be going on? And so let's look at it a little bit bigger, larger context. When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of a foreign tongue, Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion.

In other words, this is reflecting back on the prime event in their history. Coming out of Egypt. No wonder you've got all nature being presented as engaging in such rejoicing.

Why is it, O sea, that you fled? O Jordan, that you turned back? You mountains, that you skipped like rams? You hills like lambs? Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the

Lord. At the presence of the God of Jacob. God has done remarkable things, and therefore you have these things being said as manifestations.

Moving on to another kind of figurative language, the metaphor. As you know, both metaphors and similes set up unusual comparisons. We're so used in our evangelical jargon to saying God is a rock, right? I mean, we do it all the time.

Do I have that one here? No, I don't. We sing it, we say it, but actually, that's a fairly unusual comparison to say that God is a rock. Just get rid of all the baggage that goes along with various and sundry things and try and think of what's being conveyed by that.

In what sense is God a rock? You're smiling, Zach. Give us an answer. I'm sorry, say it again.

There are lots of ways that you can misinterpret that. Okay, we could think of lifeless, dull, and dead. In other words, in contrast to the trees and so forth and so on.

What else? By the way, even in our context as in, what's the right word? Infused or impacted by biblical truth, there's going to be some ambiguity. Yeah, Ginger. Okay, something that's constant, basic, foundational, substantial, unchanging.

Nick. Okay, again, so our foundations, in other words, our faith is built on the 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 in there as well.

And it gets picked up in the New Testament too. At any rate, we don't have time to unpack all the theology of God as a rock, but nevertheless, think about the metaphors that show up in scripture. Now, this one is also a very common one.

You are a shield around me, oh 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 protected, and we manage to protect ourselves so well, and our parents do, and our institutions do, et cetera.

We're not aware often of how desperately we need God's protection. But here we're 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, or at least the easiest one, is that the simile does indeed import the word like or as into it. So, you have that articulated comparison. So, the one who is righteous will be like a tree.

And then, of course, it goes on and describes the beautiful imagery planted by water, leaves in their season, bearing fruit, and all those things that are also part of the simile. Okay, additional characteristics. Well, let's just do a couple more.

The acrostic. And as you know, when we're talking about an acrostic in Hebrew poetry, that's biblical Hebrew poetry, we're talking about words, the first words of each line of the poetry that start with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 is our major one because each of the eight verses starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph, and then the next eight start with Beit, the next eight, Gimel, and so forth, all the way on through all of the Hebrew alphabet.

And you're thinking, okay, that's really nice. And by the way, these other Psalms do the same thing. Proverbs 31 is a wonderful description of a woman who is impossible to live up to, you know, that ideal woman there.

We'll talk about that when we talk about Proverbs. That too, starting with verse 10 of Proverbs 31, right on through the end of the chapter is an acrostic. Lamentations is going to involve acrostics.

So it's a way of actually saying, here is a comprehensive statement about X, in this case, all the way from A to Z, if you will, Aleph to Tav in the Hebrew alphabet. Now again, you know, not so hard if you're talking about using it once. But try and think of eight times that you could start a line of poetry with the letter X. They're the equivalent of X, you know; in other words, it is difficult to start a line of poetry with because not too many words start with these letters.

Hebrew has its equivalence to X and perhaps Z, right? And yet the psalmist here in 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? Ginger. Ah, you're thinking of Psalm 19.

Well, Psalm 19, I shouldn't say. But this is 119, which is going to have some of that in there, but there's more of a driving force in every verse towards Kate. Yes, the word of God, the statutes of God, the judgments of God, and so forth, and the commandments, the testimonies.

Overriding emphasis on this, Psalm 119 then is going to be a comprehensive statement of the utter sufficiency of the word of God for everything that we might possibly need it for. Now, we might get a little bit, well, short in our attention span, I could say when we're reading through it. We need to read it with a sense that this is a multifaceted 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 it.

Okay, just a couple of other things. This also gets along the whole full extent of a matter idea. We have what are called numbered patterns.

I can't think of another way of saying that, but look at Psalm 62 as our example from the Psalms, and then I'll note for you that 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, two.

In the book of Proverbs chapter 30, three things, no four, are thus and so. In Proverbs 6, verses 16 through 19, six things the Lord hates, seven are utterly detestable to him. Interestingly enough, among those seven, twice we read, lying, falsehood, and deceit are utterly detestable to God.

So, it's a way of saying, here's a comprehensive look at some particular issue, and it gives some sort of sense of order to it as well. Well, we need to keep moving along. By the way, do you have any questions on that before we actually jump into the Psalms themselves? All right, introduction to Psalms.

As I said a moment ago, these are primarily David's, but they're Israel's more than anything. One of the neat things about the Psalms, as I've noted for you here, is that not only are they God's word to us, like all the rest of scripture, which is indeed God's word to us, but they're reflecting human words back to God. And that's vitally important for reasons that I hope will become evident, especially when we get to the end of our lecture today.

But the Psalms give us really a pattern, a paradigm for expressing the whole range of human emotions. You're joyous, and there's a Psalm that matches that. You're really vexed at somebody who has unjustly wronged you, there are Psalms that express that.

You're anxious and need to learn to trust, and there are Psalms that express that. So, it's a pattern, a paradigm, as I said, for our learning, not to just vent, but to channel that back to God, who, as sovereign God, 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 lily-livered, milk-toast types that say all the right things, they don't.

They say what's on their hearts. And sometimes those things are very true to the kinds of things that we feel and need to express as well. So, they're very helpful that way.

Well, we can do both of these at once. The Psalm titles, you know, that fine print that shows up ahead of the Psalm itself, probably not in the original Psalm texts, as far as we can tell. When you read your Hebrew Bible now, you'll see that the Psalm titles

are actually verse one, so sometimes your version of the Psalms is going to be a little different in English than it is in Hebrew.

Whenever they came into the text, they do bring us some rather interesting information. And so I've tried to summarize here what we can indeed learn from the Psalm titles. Not all Psalms have titles, 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's sin 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 this Psalm was written. And it certainly fits. Now, I'll be the first to tell you that as you read the Psalm titles carefully, not all of them seem to fit quite as well.

That might be one of the illustrations of the issue that I raised in terms of not possibly being part of the original text. Secondly, we do have authorships, again, ascribed to these Psalms, more than 70 of David. But notice some of the other ones that show up.

Guy named Asaph writes some very significant Psalms. Many of them have to do with the devastation that Jerusalem and Mount Zion and the temple have experienced at the hands of evil peoples. 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's Korah? Katie. Right, he's a Levite, isn't he? And because he and a number of others were in rebellion against Moses and Aaron, and particularly Korah wanted the priestly line, he and, the text says, his men were swallowed up when the earth opened up.

But here we have the indication, which, by the way, we also have in Numbers chapter 26, that not all of the line of Korah died out. And what's beautiful about this is, and I may have mentioned this when we were talking about Korah, but here's our chance to repeat it, okay? Here's what's beautiful about this. God doesn't permanently reject the descendants of Korah because of what Korah did.

In fact, they're reinstated, and they're actually those who are going to serve in the presence of God in the temple, and even compose some of the things that are Psalms. So the Sons of Korah is very interesting, and I would say illustrative, Psalm title 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 then there are some that are anonymous, so we simply don't know.

As you read these Psalm titles as well, sometimes you see some things that you just don't understand. Shigion, well, what's that? You know, we don't know. They're probably musical notes, something about how they are performed.

What we need to remember is that this stuff was sung. We read them. We're 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, career is probably the wrong word to use here but venture into a Scottish Presbyterian church or something that sings Psalms because they'll have a whole different flavor for you when you learn, not just to sing little verses as we're doing, but singing whole Psalms. It's a wonderful experience. Well, just a bit of an arrangement.

We have five books of Psalms as you look at them in your English translations. That, of course, parallels quite nicely our five books of Moses, and I would suggest it's intentionally done that way. But here's the interesting thing.

Remember our three, as I'm holding up four fingers, I can count too. Remember our three sections of the Hebrew Bible? What are they? The first is Torah, starts with T. The second section of the Hebrew Bible is Nevi'im, prophets, right? And that's going to begin with Judges. Sorry, Joshua, get it right.

The third section is the Ketuvim, the writings, and that begins with the book of Psalms, the Psalter. Now, what's fascinating is that Joshua, as we saw when we started that, begins with a strong exhortation from God to 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 is reiterated. Okay, one who meditates on the Torah.

Very important concept here. Well, some basic teachings in the Psalms that we want to make a note of as well. And there are others, okay, there are others, but these are the ones that are shot through the Psalms.

You see them over and over and over again. First of all, who God is. You want to get a 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's done for them over and over and over again.

We get a good and profound sense, particularly of two keywords. Again, these are not the only ones, but these show up repeatedly. Hesed, which we've already seen and sung about.

God's covenant, unfailing, loyal love. It's a theme that comes through again and again in the Psalms. God is effecting, working his hesed on behalf of his people.

We also have two additional terms that show up again and again and again. Emet is truth, and a related word faithfulness, emunah. Truth and faithfulness, they're very much bound together.

Those two things show up over and over again. Take a look when you get a chance at Psalm 103, because that's one very beautiful and probably well-known passage, and it's going to focus on those a good deal. By way of contrast, and in some ways I hope you're seeing that there's a little bit of a similarity here between the purposes of Torah, show the 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 deliverance from enemies, maybe deliverance from his own sins and his own sinful self. And then, thirdly, a deep love for God's word. Whoa, 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 are really important, but here they're 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, that goes along with an express determination to live in a way that's pleasing to God.

So, notice it's picking up on a lot of Torah ideas, because what's Torah for? Instruction is for us to learn how to live in a way that's pleasing to our covenant God. What else do we have to say? Ah, yes. Here's where we might begin to feel a little bit like a grocery list, so let me make a couple of introductory comments.

I'm not in any way trying to rob the Psalms of their beauty and their compelling capturing of your hearts, all right? So just beware 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 a 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 the representative examples.

In other words, go look at the representative examples and see how they fit into each of these categories. And then I'm going to add a few more categories too. First of all, there are laments.

And a lament, of course, is expressing great distress and anguish and pain of heart over something that has gone wrong. These can be individual laments. These can be corporate laments.

The corporate laments often come out of the context where God's people have been taken into exile. They've been ripped out of their context of the land. They don't know what God is going to do with them next.

But coming through at the end, generally speaking, is an expression of trust in God, regardless of the circumstances that look so dismal. I've given you 42 and 43. If you've read the 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 that ongoing thing, the one who is lamenting. 137 is probably the classic example of Israel as a body, as the people of God, lamenting their horrible circumstances and expressing distress and suffering.

Now, kind of a related category; in fact, some people actually put this next bunch in with personal laments, but I like to think of them as separate, are those Psalms that are penitential Psalms. As you recognize, penitential is related to repentance, expressing extreme sorrow over sin. As Benjamin Warfield, who was a great theologian from Princeton back at the beginning of the 20th century, said, the person who writes the penitential Psalms, and in the case of 51, it's probably David, is recognizing what he has almost forfeited.

In other words, his entire life, what he's almost forfeited as a result of sin, willful sin, disobedience, and rebellion against God. The penitential Psalm is when somebody comes to the place of realizing that the only hope is if I cast myself at the foot of the cross, this is coming through the Christian scene right now, but it's Lent, right? And say, I'm a mess, I've 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'll take the, maybe a little change of tone a little bit here. We have Thanksgiving Psalms, wonderful Psalms of praise and thanks to God for what he's done for the people.

Psalms 118 is a little bit longer Psalm. One of the most lovely parts of that is actually quoted, Hosanna, as the people are going up, blessed be the name of the Lord, save us, Lord. Blessed is the name of the one who comes in the name of the Lord, I'll get that right.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. All right, and then hymns of praise. This is, Psalm 8 is a classic example of this.

This is our Psalm, of course, where the psalmist is praising God for the majesty of creation. Oh Lord, how majestic is your name on all the earth? He then talks about the creation that God has made and the fact that he's made humankind a little lower than the angels, a Psalm that gets cited as well in the New Testament. There's salvation history Psalms, most of which focus on God's, and we've said this already: amazing work on behalf of Israel, bringing them, delivering them out of Egypt, and bringing them into freedom and, interestingly, bondage to him at Sinai.

Psalm 78 starts out with the imperative, tell this to your children and to your children's children. In other words, use this poetic form, not just to sing to the Lord, but to pass the truth on. Poetry is a wonderful way to convey truth to generation after generation as well.

And Psalm 78 is going to start out with that and then go on and talk about God's work for 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 you know what, it's a matter of time. Those of you who are music majors and perhaps know Johannes Brahms, we've been singing a little of him lately. By the way, Mia Chung is performing the Brahms Piano Concerto at the May concert.

You're going to love it, go. But at any rate, Brahms also wrote a Requiem. A Requiem, of course, is something that's offered generally in the context of death, but there's an aberration that Brahms made in his Requiem text.

Those of you who know this are well aware that he incorporates Psalm 84. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts. It's a remarkably beautiful thing.

And then he goes on to talk about it. Blessed are those whose strength is in you who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. In other words, they're going to Zion.

Verse seven, they go from strength to strength until each appears before God in Zion. Verse 10: better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. This is someone who loves the prospect of going up to worship God in Zion.

And sings about it. All right, Songs of Trust, 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 are good figures for kings.

They're 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 in the wilderness. Okay, those are some overarching classifications that are suggested by a number of scholars who deal with this stuff.

I've got two more that I want to add for us. One of them is, oh, I'm sorry, forgive me. I forgot to put this in here.

We need to look at it. I should have avoided animation on this one. Here's why you want to go to Israel and study.

I know you're sick of 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're standing right about here, you're looking up, no matter which direction you look. The mountains to the east, Kidron to the south, South Hill to the west, West Hill and Hinnom Valley, and then the mountains over there, and even the Temple Mount. Every direction you look, north, south, east, west, you are looking up when you're on Mount Zion, quote unquote Mount Zion.

And so then, two of our Psalms have a slightly different flavor to them, don't they? I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth. And then 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 its geographical context. It unfolds a whole different dimension. Likewise, Psalm 125, verse two.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, you get a flavor of it now. Here's little Jerusalem in David's day. So, the Lord surrounds his people, both now and forevermore.

Mountains, as we said earlier, don't move too quickly. Now let's go on to what I was going to do next. Categories.

I want to give special focus to those Psalms that are Messianic Psalms. Now, each of them in and of themselves, structurally, might fit into 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 Mashiach, which means to be smeared with oil or anointed with oil. Mashiach is Hebrew, Christos is 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, isn't it? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That's Jesus as he's hanging on the cross, and the wrath of God is poured out upon him at that point in time against all of human sin, and an indescribable separation between the persons of the Trinity. God the Father 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 have known the rest of it as well.

All who see me mock me. They hurl insults, shaking their heads. He trusts in the Lord.

Let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, as since he delights him. In Matthew 26, we find the crowds are saying that kind of thing.

Going on down, verse 16. They've pierced my hands and my feet. I can count my bones.

They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. So you see aspects of this Psalm that were originally David's Psalm now coming to full fruition in the ministry of Christ on the cross and all the things 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 that we know from Genesis 14.

This Psalm starts out very clearly referring to kingly motifs. 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 a number of times in the New Testament on occasion when Jesus is having some confrontations with his opponents, all right? This is a clear Messianic reference.

The Lord said to my Lord, David speaking, that Jesus would use that to challenge his opponents, but it's not only the kingly aspect. Look at verse four. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

You are a priest forever after 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's talking about Jesus and Melchizedek, and Melchizedek certainly being the foreshadowing of Jesus as the great high priest.

Again, more Messianic psalms. We've got one more category we need to do, and that is the imprecatory psalms, or if you'd like to pronounce it differently, 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 things? What's an imprecation? I guarantee you, you don't want one uttered about you.

It's a curse. These are psalms that specifically ask God to curse people. Since we're on 110, we're just going to back up to 199, 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.

Notice what he says, starting at verse six. Appoint an evil man to oppose him. Let a satan, your NIV says accuser.

Ha-Satan is the sorry, not ha satan is the satan is the Hebrew word there. When he's tried, let him be found guilty.

May his prayers condemn him. May his days be few. In other words, would you please just kill him off? Well, that's being said.

May his children be fatherless. May 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. He never thought of doing kindness, and hounded to death the poor, 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 10 past. But keep in mind the measure-for-measure justice here.

The psalmist is saying, this guy cursed. And it says he goes on. He wore cursing as a garment.

So, it's something that's intrinsic to who he is and how he manifests himself with people. And so, God's being 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. And by the way, I know this is a really kind of discouraging way to end a lecture. But on the other hand, maybe it'll help us a little bit.

These psalms are part of scripture. In other words, we can't take our scissors and cut them out and say, don't like that one. They're there.

They're there, and we need to think about them. And the 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 these kinds of situations where an injustice has been done, like to take it upon ourselves. Oh, we don't go out with a sword and chop off somebody's head. But verbally, we often do the same thing by spreading all sorts of stuff all over everywhere.

And the psalmist hasn't done that. He's not taking vengeance either verbally or otherwise. He's asking God to care about the problem, which is, of course, the best place to do it and to take the issue.

As you read the entire psalm, and there are other psalms as well, as I said, 140, and then sections of a number of other psalms. Get the point, by the way? This shows up repeatedly in the psalms. It must be a major problem, having to deal with injustice, having to deal with people who are just plain evil.

The writer is concerned for God's glory. He also recognizes, as we need to, that he is a sinner and needs God's mercy as much as anyone else.

It's just that the other person in this context has been operating entirely contrary to the covenant obligations under which they all live. By the way, interestingly, parts of this psalm show up in the book of Acts when Judas is referenced. And then, finally, no gloating over the fall of the enemy and the hope and the prospect that if a person is indeed turned over to God's treatment, chastisement, that might bring 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. So, see you Wednesday, all prepared for the exam.