

Psalms Notes

A collection of unrelated texts. A wide range of things and times. Some have specific settings, most don't.

Davidic authorship- this seems to be an old tradition, but nevertheless is contradicted by some of the titles. The titles to the Psalms are secondary, and are an instance of early interpretation that has made its way into the actual text.

The collection has 150 psalms in it. This seems to be a set number- the Vulgate version splits psalm 9 into two but then combines 146 and 147.

evidence of the collection being changed a lot is after 72

72:20 End of the prayers of David son of Jesse.

This one is weird because it is "of Solomon."

They are all said to be Davidic even though they are attributed to other people. Problems of the "L" preposition in Hebrew

Problem of context. How were these performed? 136 is the only one that has any obvious clues.

Things we don't know which may be signs- some of the words- Selah, Tefillah vs. Mizmor, a maskil, l'menatzeach, on the gittit

groups we don't know much about- Korachites, Ezraiters, others

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Some historical notes in the titles, which are doubtless later additions-

34:1 Of David, when he feigned madness in the presence of Abimelech, who turned him out, and he left.

51:1 For the leader. A psalm of David,

51:2 when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had come to Bathsheba.

The "I" of the psalms- part of their power and popularity

OK lets look at some types of psalms. They can be difficult to classify, and any classification will doubtless have problems. But lets look at a few types.

Switching to KJV, which captures the beauty better, even if as a translation it levels the prose on too high a level- Samuel-Kings is not beautifully written.

So let's look at some kinds of Psalms.

Royal Psalms- some psalms are taken up with praising the King

2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

2:3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

2:5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

2:6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

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2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

2:8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

2:9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

2:10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Lots of them are laments coupled with pleas for justice from above

35:1 Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

35:2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

35:3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

35:4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

35:5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them.

35:6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

35:7 For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.

35:8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

35:9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.

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35:10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

35:11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.

35:12 They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.

35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

35:14 I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

35:15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not:

35:16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

35:17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.

35:18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

35:19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.

35:20 For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.

35:21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.

35:22 This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

35:23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

35:24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

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35:25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

35:26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.

35:27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

35:28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

Some are straight praise/thanksgiving psalms

136:1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever:

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136:15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:23 Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136:24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136:26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Some are penitential

51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

51:2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

51:6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

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51:8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

51:9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

51:11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

51:12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

51:13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

51:14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

51:15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

51:16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

51:18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

51:19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

Some are historical (and obviously after David)

137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

137:2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

137:3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

137:4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?

137:5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

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137:6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

137:7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

137:8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

137:9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

You have to talk about Psalm 23

23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

23:5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.