### Categories of Psalms


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Hymns</th>
<th>Laments</th>
<th>Thanksgiving</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Divine Kingship</th>
<th>Royal</th>
<th>Wisdom and Torah</th>
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<td><strong>Topic</strong></td>
<td>Praising God for his work in creation or redemption, or for his attributes.</td>
<td>Plea for God to act to save from trouble. Express disorientation of person/people praying. Communal or individual. 1/3 of psalms</td>
<td>Praise and thank God for his saving action, often in response to a prayer. Communal or individual.</td>
<td>Express trust in God regarding personal trouble that is not yet resolved</td>
<td>Focus on the kingship of God manifest in creation, redemption, and/or judgment</td>
<td>Concern with Davidic king as blessing for people</td>
<td>Affinity with wisdom lit in vocabulary and themes; emphasis on teaching and reflection</td>
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</table>
| **Structure**| 1) opening invitation to praise God  
2) explanation of reasons to praise God  
3) concluding affirmation of faith or repeated invitation to praise | 1) Plea movement (longer section) addresses three questions: a) **To Whom** the plea is addressed (O LORD,…). b) **Why** am I experiencing trouble? (complaint or confession). c) **What** does the psalmist want God to do concretely? (forgiveness, healing, vindication, deliverance, support.  
2) Praise movement may include statement of faith or trust, or a vow to offer thanks or sacrifice in temple (e.g., 56:12). | 1) Psalmist’s intention to praise God (34:1; 75:1) or expression of loving gratitude (116:1; 18:1)  
2) Narration of trouble, petition, and deliverance  
3) Renewed thanksgiving, or invitation to others | No common structure. | No common structure. |                                                                                     |                                                                                 |


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<td>Other traits</td>
<td>Bright, positive mood</td>
<td>Characterized by honesty and intensity of feeling. Move from negative to positive, from plea to praise. On literal level, psalmist’s prayer is for this life (e.g., 27:13)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Confident mood. God as “refuge” is dominant image. Lack the anguish that characterizes laments; have not yet experienced the salvation that characterizes psalms of thanksgiving.</td>
<td>Common affirmation: “Lord is king”</td>
<td>prayers (20), thanks (21); messianic</td>
<td>Contrast way of the righteous, way of the wicked; invite decisions that accord with God’s teaching (Torah) and urge trust in God</td>
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<td>E.g.s</td>
<td>103, 104, 105, 9, 30, 27</td>
<td>27, 93-99, (also 47, 24, 29)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2, 72, 110</td>
<td>1, 19, 32, 34, 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, 128</td>
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No strict division of psalms into categories works; some are mixed types and can be categorized in various ways. Other designations include:

- **“Songs of Zion”** (137:3) celebrate Jerusalem as the city the Lord has chosen, will save, and exalt (46, 48, 76, 87, 122, [137]).
- Psalms that draw lessons from history are called **historical** (78, 104-107).
- Some that contain oracles are called **prophetic** (81).
- Some laments include curses or imprecations and are sometimes called **cursing** psalms (35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 83, 109, 137).
- Some are grouped on the basis of liturgical usage (sometimes conjectural):
  - *Hallel psalms* sung at Passover and other festivals, 113-118;
  - *Songs of Ascents* for going up to Jerusalem or climbing temple stairs, 120-134; and
  - *entrance hymns*, perhaps sung as the temple’s entrance, 15, 24.
- Some are associated with court ceremony are called **enthronement** psalms (2, 110) or **royal wedding** songs (45).
- Tradition identifies seven as **penitential psalms**, emphasizing repentance for sin: 6, 25, 32, 38, 51, 130, 143.