

## Psalms 101-106

### Psalms 101-106

#### Psalms of David, 101-103

After reading that “the Lord reigns” in Psalms 93-99, suddenly we see David’s return in 101-103. Psalms 101-103 were probably written as a unit,<sup>1</sup> whose parts are summarized in 101:1-2a (Table 1, chart). He resolves resolve “to behave myself in a perfect way” as he takes the

throne (101), trusting the Lord to deal with adversaries who might take advantage of his integrity (102), and praising God for his loyal love (103). David’s return and his emphasis on God’s loyal love directly challenges Ethan’s lament in Psalm 89.

Summary (101:1-2a)	Amplification
1 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.	Psalm 103
2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.	Ps 101:2b-8
O when wilt thou come unto me?	Psalm 102

*Table 1: Unity of Psalms 101-103*

#### Psalm 101, The Upright Judge

**1 A Psalm of David.**--This Psalm and 103 bear David’s name, but the plan indicated in vv. 1-2 suggests that Psalm 102 is also by him, and it resembles many of his laments from Book 1.

Figure 1 (chart) summarizes the structure of the Psalm. After the four clauses that introduce the trilogy, this is an ethics policy for David’s administration. 1b-4 describe his personal resolve to avoid wickedness, and then 5-8 declare his policy with regard to his advisors.<sup>2</sup> The order follows our Lord’s instruction,

Mat 7:5 first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

**I will sing of mercy מִרְחָם and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.**--The king’s ultimate objective is to celebrate the Lord’s merciful and righteous rule, anticipating Ps 103:6, 8.

**2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.**--To do this, he must himself judge rightly.

**O when wilt thou come unto me?**--But ethical uprightness invites the wicked to take advantage of him, and he needs the Lord’s intervention.

His first principle of ruling is to maintain his own integrity in heart and eyes (chiastic).

**I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.**--This attribute is used in the Bible only with respect to kings. It appears first to describe Abimelech’s treatment of Sarah in Gen 20:5, 6. Then it describes David in 1 Kings 9:4, and again in Ps 78:70.

The fundamental notion of “integrity” חָזָק (Strong 8537) is completeness. A heart with integrity or

Psalm 101, The Upright Judge
1-2a, Introduction to 101-103 1, Praise for God’s <span style="color: blue;">טוֹן</span> → Ps 103 2a, David’s resolve → Ps 101 2b, Cry for God’s help → Ps 102
2b-4, Personal Uprightness 2b, David’s <span style="color: red;">heart</span> 3, <span style="color: blue;">David’s eyes</span> against wickedness 4, David’s <span style="color: red;">heart</span>
5-8, Corporate Uprightness 5, <span style="color: red;">Cut off</span> the proud <span style="color: red;">heart</span> 6, <span style="color: blue;">David’s eyes</span> on the faithful 7-8, <span style="color: red;">Cut off</span> the wicked doers

*Figure 1: Structure of Psalm 101*

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg, followed by Alexander.

<sup>2</sup> This Psalm amplifies Messiah’s declaration in 75:2 and the description of Yahweh as king in 99:4.

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perfection is not divided among multiple loyalties. Abimelech had no hidden motive in taking Sarah; because of Abram's deception, he honestly thought she was eligible. As applied to the Israelite David, the expression recalls the requirement of the Shema (chart):

Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with **all thine heart**, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

The scriptures often describe a righteous king, such as David (1 Ki 14:8), Hezekiah (2 Ch 31:21), Jehoshaphat (2 Ch 22:9) or Josiah (2 Ch 23:25; 34:31) as walking before the Lord "with all his heart." Our Savior viewed the heart as the moral control center for the life:

Mar 7:20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

A perfect heart leaves no room for these things. In contemplating how we manage our lives, we do well to ask if our hearts are divided, or if they are wholly devoted to serving the Lord.

**3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.**--How does one maintain a perfect heart? An important principle is not to direct our attention toward wicked things. What media do you consume, and what values does it promote? You cannot consume sexually explicit videos or movies, or music that promotes violence and rebellion, or podcasts that downgrade divinely appointed authorities such as parents or government, and maintain a pure heart. You must hate it to keep it from cleaving to you.

**4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.**--The opposite of a perfect heart is a froward one, literally, a heart that is twisted, leading to confused and sinful conduct.<sup>3</sup> "Person" is not in the original; David insists that he will eschew evil in general.

Having resolved to maintain his own integrity, he will insist on the integrity of his associates. Here we have the qualifications list for members of David's administration. Again, the section is chiasmic. This time, the center describes righteous associates, while the outer members characterize those whom he rejects, using the verb צַמַת C (Strong 6789) (translated "cut off" in 5 but "destroy" in 8). Let's consider those whom he disqualifies from his administration first, before turning to those he supports. He highlights two intolerable behaviors.

**5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off צַמַת C:**--He rejects the common political game of secret criticism.

**him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.**--Such criticism is often motivated by a desire on the part of the critic to make himself look good.

Then, at the end of the Psalm, he resolves to root out falsehood:

**7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.**

**8 I will early destroy צַמַת C all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off כָּרַת all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.**--Removing them from the city implies removing them from his administration.

**6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that**

<sup>3</sup> תם and עקש are elsewhere parallel in Pr 19:1 and 28:6.

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**walketh in a perfect way דרך תמים, he shall serve me.**--Between these two warnings to evildoers, David expresses his support for those who, like him, walk in integrity, “a perfect way,” the way that David has chosen for himself in v. 2.

David tried to enforce these standards. Recall his justice on the Amalekite who claimed have killed Saul (2 Samuel 1) or the assassins of Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 4), or his mourning over the death of Abner (2 Samuel 3). But he failed to remove Joab, even when he realized his corruption. More importantly, he violated his own integrity, in the Bathsheba affair.

The ultimate fulfillment awaits the Messiah. He alone can say, “Which of you convinceth me of sin” (John 8:46), satisfying the first part of the Psalm. As to the second part, recall that one day we shall reign with him. The implication of this Psalm for us is that we must walk in a perfect way and avoid the wickedness of vv. 5, 7-8, the works of the flesh.

### **Psalm 102**

This Psalm answers David’s plea in 101:2, “When wilt thou come unto me?” Integrity makes us vulnerable to the wicked, who do not constrain their actions in the same way. The solution is trust in our all-powerful God.

**1 A Prayer of the afflicted,**--David uses this term to describe himself frequently; in Book 1 alone, we find it in 22:24; 25:16; 34:6; 35:10; 40:17. These parallels, and the alignment with 101:1-2, suggest that this Psalm is also Davidic.

**when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.**--One who seeks to maintain integrity before the Lord will often feel overwhelmed in the midst of a wicked world.

The Psalm is organized as an alternation (Table 2, chart) between the Psalmist’s transience and suffering and the Lord’s eternal power, between the shortness of “my days” and the unending character of “thy years.”

David's suffering and transience (“my days”)	1-11	23-24a
The Lord's eternal intervention (“all generations,” “thy years”)	12-22	24b-28

Table 2: Structure of Psalm 102

**Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily. 3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. 4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. 7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. 8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, 10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. 11 My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.**--David describes his sense of oppression by his enemies, but he is aware that the Lord is ultimately in control of his suffering, v. 10.

The answer lies in God’s eternity, and his intervention (marked in green).

**12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.**--Here is his eternity--“all generations” compared with David’s “days.”

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**13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy** **רחם** upon Zion: for the time to favour **הנן** her, yea, the set time, is come.--And here is God’s intervention, answering his question, “When wilt thou come unto me?” “Mercy” and “favour” here are related to the first two words in Ex 34:6, and (together with **חסד** in 101:1) anticipate the full confession of God’s attributes in Psalm 103.

**14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. 15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. 16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.**--Again, the Lord comes to his people, restoring Zion (and with it, the Davidic dynasty).

**17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.**--His intervention will lead the people to praise the Lord. This is the first instance in the Psalms of **הלל** יה, here indicative (also 115:7; 150:6); it becomes imperative in 104ff, leading to the great climax of 146-150.<sup>4</sup>

**19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; 21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; 22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.**--The Lord can intervene because, though enthroned in heaven, he continually monitors the earth.

**23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. 24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days:**--David briefly returns to the plight of his short days.

**thy years are throughout all generations. 25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: 27 But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.**--But once more he turns to the comfort derived from the assurance that God’s power is forever. Note in particular the sustenance of “the children of thy servants,” in particular, maintaining the Davidic dynasty.<sup>5</sup>

### **Psalm 103**

#### **1 A Psalm of David.**

This is the song “of mercy and of judgment” promised in 101:1—mercy **רחם** in 4, 8, 11, 17, and judgment **משפט** in 6.

The Psalm is chiasmatic (Table 3, chart). It begins and ends with a call to bless the Lord, expanding the theme “I will sing.” Then it moves through descriptions of the Lord’s judgment to a center section that amplifies the presentation of God’s mercy from Ex 34:6.

Theme (101:1)	1-8	9-22
I will sing ...	1-5 Personal	20-22 Global
... of judgment	6	19
... of <b>mercy</b> (loyal love)	7-8 <b>רחום</b> merciful <b>חנון</b> gracious <b>slow to anger</b> plenteous in <b>רחם</b> mercy	17-18 <b>Loyal Love</b>
		14-16 <b>(Gracious)</b>
		13 <b>Compassion</b>
		10-12 <b>Loyal Love</b>
		9 <b>Slow to Anger</b>

Table 3: Structure of Psalm 103

4 There is one previous instance of the verb with the full name, **יהוה**, in Psa 22:26, the praise section that concludes the deep lament of Gethsemene.

5 The writer to the Hebrews quotes vv. 25-27 in showing that Jesus is better than the angels. See notes for discussion of various interpretations.

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**Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his**

**benefits:**--The opening call to praise is addressed by David to himself. To “bless the Lord” (ברך, Strong 1288) is a special form of praise, focusing on his gifts to us. Its meaning is close to that of our English term “thank.” Confusingly, the AV uses “thank” for ידה (Strong 3034), meaning to confess the Lord, focusing on his intrinsic character, as we saw in studying the related term תודה (Strong 8426) in 100:1, 4. This Psalm is the second peak of ברך in the Psalter (Figure 2, chart), after Psalm 68 (cf. v. 19) and before 135 (recalling the benefits of God’s past deliverance of his people).

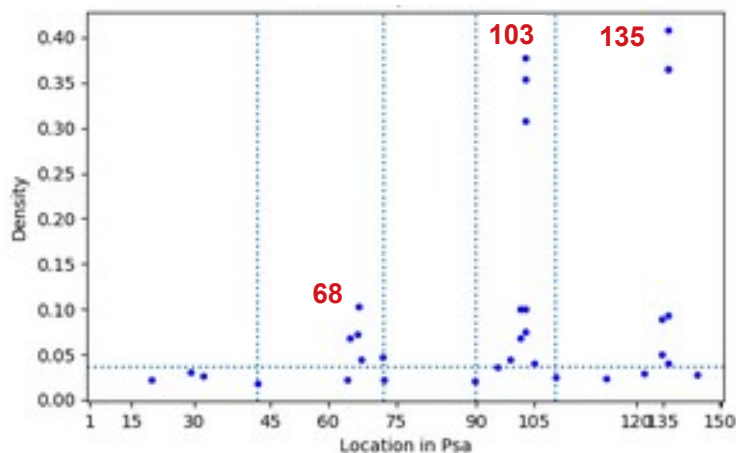


Figure 2: "Bless the Lord" or "Blessed be the Lord" in Psalms

**3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness חסד and tender mercies רחם; 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.**--The first benefit is forgiveness of iniquities, a major theme of the attributes expounded later.

**6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.**--Next he describes the Lord’s execution of righteous government. Between vv. 4 and 6 we have the “mercy and judgment” promised in 101:1. But now he will greatly expand the theme of mercy.

**7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.**--David reminds his readers that the Lord revealed his חסד through Moses. Moses plays a special role in Book 4. The only reference to him outside of this book is at the end of Psalm 77, in Book 3, one bright reminder of God’s faithfulness in a very dark history:

Psa 77:20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

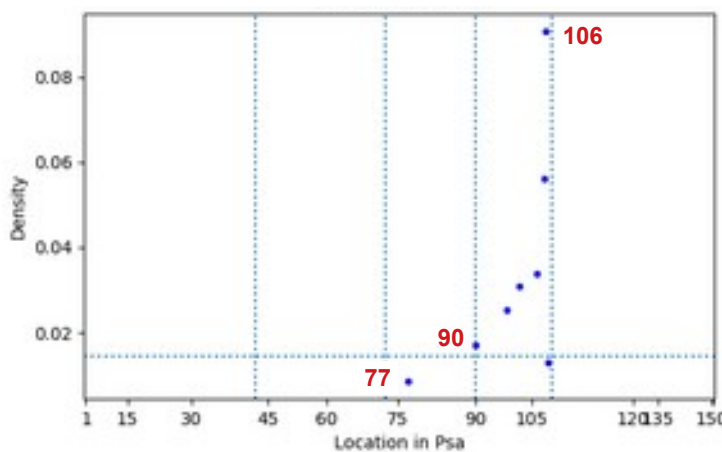


Figure 3: Moses in the Psalms

The other references are all in Book 4, starting with the initial Psalm, “A Prayer of Moses,” and ending with the overall peak in the final Psalm (Figure 3, chart).

The point of this emphasis may be part of the editor’s response to the despair of Ethan and Heman in Psalms 88 and 89 that God’s חסד has failed, and that the promise of the Davidic dynasty is overthrown. He answers this in two ways: by tracing the notion of God’s loyal love

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back far beyond David to Moses, and by bringing back the voice of David to anticipate the righteous rule of the Messiah. The reference in Psalm 77, one bright light at the end of Asaph's lament, anticipates this perspective.

**8 The LORD is merciful רחום and gracious חנון, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy חסד.**-- This is a very close summary of Ex 34:6.<sup>6</sup> He now unfolds these characteristics:

**9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep<sup>7</sup> his anger for ever.**--First he amplifies what it means for God to be slow to anger.

**10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy חסד toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.**--His חסד ensures that, when his anger is kindled, forgiveness is available. so thorough that one cannot measure the distance to which our sin is removed (Figure 4, chart). This is the point God emphasized to Moses in Exodus. The background to the interview is the sin of the golden calf, and having listed the four attributes, the Lord goes on to say,



Figure 4: Psalm 103:12

Exo 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

**13 Like as a father pitieth רחם his children, so the LORD pitieth רחם them that fear him.**-- Now he turns to the first word of the confession, explaining God's compassion by comparing it with the attitude of a father toward his children.

**14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.**--David does not repeat the fourth attribute, חנון, which refers to the attitude that grants an undeserved boon to someone in need. David's description of our frailty establishes the need to which God is gracious (the same need he has already emphasized in Psalm 102).

**17 But the mercy חסד of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; 18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.**--Finally, he returns to the attribute of loyal love, and asserts (correcting Heman and Ethan once more) that it lasts forever, and that apparent failings can be traced to abandonment of his covenant.

**19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.**--Working out of the chiasm, we are reminded once more of the Lord's righteous government.

**20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.<sup>8</sup> 22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion:**

6 Compare another summary of Ex 34:6, in Psa 86:15 (like 102, a lament that ends in confidence).

7 Though "anger" is supplied, this is the most common sense of the rare verb נטר.

8 The plural "hosts" elsewhere is always the tribes of Israel, and probably has this sense here, intermediate between the angels in 20 and "all his works" in 22.

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**bless the LORD, O my soul.**--We end where we begin, with blessing the Lord, this time asking all his works to join in David's personal thanksgiving.

### Halleluyah Psalms, 104-106

Psalms 104-106 conclude Book 4 with a chorus of praise. Note their place in Book 4, their vocabulary, their content, and their use elsewhere in the Bible.

*Structure:* In Book 4 (Figure 5, chart), the people are in exile, with no homeland and no king. Psalms 90-91 reassure them that the Lord is their habitation. 92-100 show that the Lord reigns, and will come to judge the earth. Then, in 101-103, David reemerges, promising a restoration of the Davidic dynasty (101) and the return to Zion (102:15-18).

Each of Books 1-3 ends with blessing to God forever and an "Amen" (41:13; 72:18; 89:52). So does Book 4, 106:48. But Psalms 104-106 add, "Praise ye the Lord," forming an extended doxology to the book.

*Vocabulary:* These three Psalms introduce "Praise ye the Lord," combining the verb הלל (Strong 1984) with the short form of God's name, יה, giving "Hallelu-Yah." It is very frequent from this point on. Psalm 100 exhorts us to "thank" the Lord for his intrinsic attributes (e.g., 106:1). Psalm 103 tells us to "bless" him for the benefits he gives us (103:1). הלל is generic, including both kinds of praise (Figure 6, chart, notes).

*Content:* These three Psalms review God's loyal love through the entire OT down to the captivity (Table 4, chart). The captivity does not mean that God has failed his people. Their history since creation bears witness to his faithfulness.

*Use elsewhere:* Parts of Psalms 105 and 106, with 96, make up the Psalm that David gave Asaph in 1 Chr 16:7-36 to celebrate the bringing of the ark into Zion (Table 5, chart). These three Psalms assure the people of their coming deliverance from captivity and the reestablishment of God's Messiah in Zion.

Psalms 90-106, The Mature Faith of an Exiled People ("Maturation")  
 90-91, No **City** → God as Habitation  
 92-100, No **King** → The LORD reigns now, and will come.  
 101-103, **David** will reign in **Zion**  
**104-106, Hallelu-Yah**

Figure 5: Structure of Book 4

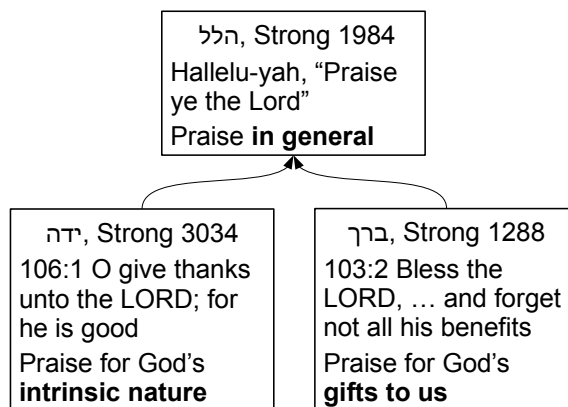


Figure 6: Words for Praise in Psalms

Ref	Topic	Ps 104	Ps 105	Ps 106
Gen 1	Creation	2-32		
Gen 12-50	Patriarchs		7-23	
Exod 1-13	Exodus		24-38	
Exod 14-Deut	Wilderness		39-43	6-33
Joshua	Conquest		44-45	
Judges-Kings	Apostasy			34-42

Table 4: The History of Israel in Psalms 104-106

1 Chr 16	Psalms
8-22	105:1-15
23-33	96 (entire)
34-36	106:1, 47-48

Table 5: Book 4 and 1 Chr 16

9 102:18 introduced an indicative form of this statement. The root (with יהרה) clusters in 22:3, 22-26.

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## Psalm 104, God's Blessings in Creation

This Psalm praises God for creation, following the order of Genesis 1.<sup>10</sup> See Table 6, chart.<sup>11</sup>

**1 Bless the LORD, O my soul.**--This expression frames this Psalm, like 103, linking the two. It alerts us that we are to understand this account of creation in terms of the blessings that it brings

**O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.**--He also acknowledges God's intrinsic greatness.

Praise the Lord			34c
Bless the Lord			34b
Descriptive praise			33-34a
Blessings of Creation	Day 1, 2	2-4, Light & Firmament: Gn 1:3-8	
	Day 3a	5-15, Separate Land & water: Gn 1:9-10	
	Day 3b	14-18, Plants: Gn 1:11-13	
	Day 4	19-23, Heavenly Bodies: Gn 1:14-19	
	Day 5	24-26, Sea Life: Gn 1:20-23	
	Day 6	27-30, Beasts & Man: Gn 1:24-31	
	Day 7	31-32, God is Satisfied: Gn 1:31-2:3	

Table 6: Structure of Psalm 104

### 2-4, Days 1-2, light and firmament<sup>12</sup>

**2 Who coverest thyself [himself] with light as with a garment:**--On Day 1, God made the light.

**who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: 3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:**--On day 2, he established the heavens above the earth. Moses simply describes the events, but the Psalmist describes the use of what is created—in this case, by him and his angels:

**who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:**--Ps 18:10.

**4 Who maketh his angels spirits [winds]; his ministers a flaming fire:**--What we perceive as wind and lightening is actually the activity of his angels. (See note for subject-predicate order.)

### 5-13, Day 3a, separation of dry land and water

**5 Who He laid [pf, not ptc as previous vv] the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. 7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. 8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. 9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.**--First we learn of the event.

**10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. 11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. 12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. 13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.**--Then we learn who benefits.

### 14-18, Day 3b, Plant life

This part intermingles the creative act and the beneficiaries:

**14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may**

<sup>10</sup> Thus older commentators (Delitzsch, Hengstenberg, Alexander, Perowne) to Fullerton (JBL 40 (1921):43-56).

<sup>11</sup> See note on the alternation between 2s and 3s references to God.

<sup>12</sup> These clauses are set apart from those on either side by being formed with participles rather than finite verbs.



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bring forth food out of the earth; 15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, *and* oil to make *his* face to shine, and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart. 16 The trees of the LORD are full *of sap*; the cedars of Lebanon, which **he** hath planted; 17 Where the birds make their nests: *as for* the stork, the fir trees *are* her house. 18 The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats; *and* the rocks for the conies.

### 19-23, Day 4: The Heavenly Bodies.

19 **He** appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.--Now we consider the heavenly bodies, established for timekeeping.

20 **Thou** makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep *forth*. 21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. 23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.--Again, we meet the beneficiaries.

### 24-26, Day 5, Sea life

The fifth day is taken entirely by the leader, as 3b was by the chorus.

24 O LORD, how manifold are **thy** works! in wisdom hast **thou** made them all: the earth is full of **thy** riches. 25 *So is* this great and wide sea, wherein *are* things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.--The focus here is only on sea animals, perhaps because the birds were already introduced to describe the value of the plant life in v. 17.

26 There go the ships: *there is* that leviathan, *whom* **thou** hast made to play therein.--The sea's value extends not only to the animals, but also to ships that travel on it.

### 27-30, Day 6, Land creatures and man

Land animals and man appear. The benefits of earlier stages have introduced these creatures earlier (18, 20-23), so we have here only God's dealings with them, not their creation.

27 These wait all upon **thee**; that **thou** mayest give *them* their meat in due season. 28 *That* **thou** givest them they gather: **thou** openest thine hand, they are filled with good. 29 **Thou** hidest thy face, they are troubled: **thou** takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30 **Thou** sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and **thou** renewest the face of the earth.

### 31-32, Day 7, God satisfied with his works

31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in **his** works. 32 **He** looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: **he** toucheth the hills, and they smoke.--The seventh day is the Sabbath, when God rests in his finished work.

### 33-35 Closing doxology

33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise זמר to my God while I have my being. 34 My meditation of **him** shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.--As in the opening, the Psalmist declares his praise for God.

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**35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.**--In addition to praise, 104 and 106 include requests. 104 asks for God's justice. He blesses all of his creatures, but brings judgment on those who do not respond with worship and obedience.

**Bless thou the LORD, O my soul.**--He repeats the distinctive formula from 103.

**Praise ye the LORD.**--This expression is added to the end of the Psalm to tie it to 105 and 106.

### **Psalm 105, God's Covenant in History**

Psalm 104 praises God for his gifts ("Bless the Lord"), while 105 praises him for his intrinsic power ("give thanks unto the Lord"). Wrapped in the call to praise, vv. 7-45a give the cause, four events in Israel's history that show God's power (Figure 7, chart). Each of these events encourages the captives in Babylon in the face of Ethan's challenge in Psalm 89.<sup>13</sup>

**1 O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. 2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. 3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore. 5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.**<sup>14</sup>--וַיִּתֵּן "give thanks" emphasizes God's intrinsic character. his "name."

**6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen: 7 He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth. 8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. 9 Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: 11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: 12 When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. 13 When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; 14 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes; 15 Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.**--He describes God's covenant with Abraham, confirmed through Jacob, with a series of words: servant, chosen, covenant, anointed. Ethan used these words in his complaint:<sup>15</sup>

Psa 89:3 I have made a **covenant** with my **chosen**, I have sworn unto David my **servant**, ...  
38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine **anointed**. 39 Thou hast made void the **covenant** of thy **servant**: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.

The appeal to Abraham here makes the same point as the appeal to Moses at the start of Book 4: God's covenant with his people did not begin with David, and does not end with the captivity. David's rule, and Messiah's after him, are rooted in God's covenant promise to Abraham,

Psalm 105, Praise for God's Covenant

1-5, Call to Praise

6-45a, Cause for Praise

6-15, Covenant with Abraham

16-23, From Prisoners to Princes

24-38, Deliverance from Captivity

39-45a, Return to the Land

45b, Call to Praise

Figure 7: Structure of Psalm 105

13 Psalm 106 anticipates further surveys of God's blessings in 135 and 136; compare surveys of sin in 78 and 106.

14 Break here, to keep together the covenant references to Abraham.

15 The observation is due to Gosse (JSOT 34.1 (2009): 25-31).

## Psalms 101-106

Gen 17:6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and **kings shall come out of thee.**

**16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. 17 He sent a man before them, *even Joseph, who* was sold for a servant: 18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: 19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. 20 The king sent and loosed him; *even the ruler of the people*, and let him go free. 21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom. 23 Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.**--Beginning as a captive, Joseph rose to a high position in Egypt. The captives would know of Daniel and recognize that Joseph's God is still active.

**24 And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. 25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants. 26 He sent Moses his servant; *and Aaron* whom he had chosen. 27 They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. 29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. 30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. 31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, *and lice* in all their coasts. 32 He gave them hail for rain, *and flaming fire* in their land. 33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts. 34 He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillers, and that without number, 35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. 36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and *there was not one feeble person* among their tribes. 38 Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.**--The third episode is the delivery of Israel from bondage. When the time came, against all odds, God humbled their enemies and brought them out. The captives should remember this historical precedent, and wait patiently for the Lord to deliver them.

**39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night. 40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like a river*. 42 For he remembered his holy promise, *and Abraham his servant*. 43 And he brought forth his people with joy, *and his chosen* with gladness: 44 And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people; 45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.**--Finally, God brought them back to the land, in fulfillment of his promise to Abraham. That same promise still holds, and the captives in Babylon can expect God to intervene for them.


**Praise ye the LORD.**--Like 104 and 106, this Psalm closes with "Hallelu-Yah."

### ***Psalm 106, God's Mercy to Sinners***

Psalm 104 *blesses* God for his gifts to his creatures through the creation. Psalm 105 *thanks* him for his glory in Israel's history. This Psalm combines both. It begins and ends with "Praise ye the Lord," and refers to thanksgiving (vv. 2, 47), but concludes, as does each of the other first four books, with blessing the Lord for his benefits to his people.

## Psalms 101-106

The structure, like Psalm 104, is a chiasmic frame around an extended list of episodes in Israel's history when the nation sinned against the Lord, and yet he forgave them in his mercy (Table 7, chart). In Ex 34:6-7, God's mercy lies at the heart of his ability to forgive. Just as Psalm 104 assures the captives on the basis of God's blessings in creation and Psalm 105 assures them based on the antiquity of his covenant, Psalm 106 assures them based on his long history of

Doxology to Book 4			48-49 Bless
Praise & Thanks	1a Praise 1b Thanks for <b>Mercy</b> <span style="color: red;">מֶרֶץ</span>		47c Praise 47b Thanks
Prayer for Salvation	2-4		47a
Episodes of Mercy	6-12, Red Sea: Ex 14-15		
	13-15, Flesh in the Desert: Ex 16		
	16-18, Rebellion in the Camp: Num 16		
	19-23, Calf at Horeb: Ex 32		
	24-27, Cold Feet: Num 14		
	28-31, Sin at Baal Peor: Num 25		
	32-33, Striking the Rock: Num 20		
	34-42, Following the Heathen: Judges - Kings		
	43-46, Summary: <b>Mercy</b> <span style="color: red;">מֶרֶץ</span> & Compassion <span style="color: red;">חַמִּים</span>		

*Table 7: Structure of Psalm 106*

forgiveness. We saw a similar pattern in Psalm 78. There, the history was a rebuke to the people for their sin; here, it reassures them of God's forgiving mercy.

**1 Praise ye the LORD.**--Now the Hallelu-Yah that ended 104 and 105 takes its place at the start as well as the end of 106.

**O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy מֶרֶץ endureth for ever.**--This verse, developing 100:4 (cf. 107, 118, and 135), is the final answer to Heman and Ethan.

**2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise תהלה?**

**3 Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.**

**4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; 5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.**--Psalm 104 closed with an appeal for God's judgment on the wicked. Psalm 106 reminds us that our sin is as ubiquitous as God's blessings in creation, and begins and ends with prayer for his salvation.

### 6-9, Sin at the Red Sea

**6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. 7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.**--The nation's sin showed itself in their complaint (Ex 14:12) when they found themselves hemmed in between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea.

**8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.**--The emphasis in this Psalm is on thanks to God for his nature. He saved them in order to exalt his name.

**9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. 10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. 11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. 12 Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.**

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### 13-15, Lusting for Flesh

**13** They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: **14** But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. **15** And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.--The next example is the people's lust for meat. God sent them quail in Exodus 16, but then smote them.

### 16-18, Rebellion of Dathan

**16** They envied Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the LORD. **17** The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. **18** And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.--Numbers 16 records the rebellion of Dathan, Abiram, and Kohath.<sup>16</sup>

### 19-23, Golden Calf

**19** They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. **20** Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. **21** They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; **22** Wondrous works in the land of Ham, *and* terrible things by the Red sea. **23** Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*.--Now the Psalmist goes back in time to the episode of the golden calf in Exodus 32.

### 24-27, Refusal to Enter the Land

**24** Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: **25** But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. **26** Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: **27** To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.--In Numbers 14, the people respond to the report of the spies with a refusal to trust the Lord and enter the land.

### 28-31, Plains of Moab

**28** They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. **29** Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. **30** Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and *so* the plague was stayed. **31** And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.--When they arrive at the Plains of Moab, they are seduced in Numbers 25 to joining in idolatrous worship.

### 32-33, Second striking of the rock

**32** They angered *him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: **33** Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.--Numbers 20 recalls how Moses struck the rock the second time.

<sup>16</sup> It's curious that the poet does not mention Korah—perhaps because his descendants had been so faithful in serving the Tabernacle?

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### 34-42, Judges and Kings

34 They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: 35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. 36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. 37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, 38 And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. 39 Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. 40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. 41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. 42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.--This paragraph summarizes the sad history of compromise that extends from Judges through the books of Kings, leading to the captivity.

### 43-46, Summary pattern

43 Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked *him* with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. 44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: 45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of **his mercies** **חַסְדֵּי**. 46 He made them also to be pitied **רַחֵם** of all those that carried them captives.--This final paragraph summarizes the repeated cycle of salvation, sin, discipline, and cry, recalling the overall structure of the book of Judges, as well as Psalm 78.

47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen,--The Psalm concludes as it began, with a prayer for salvation, ...

to **give thanks** **יְהִי C** unto thy holy name, *and* to triumph in thy **praise** **תְּהַלֵּל**.--... and thanksgiving and praise to God for his name (his essential character).

48 **Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen.**--This conforms to the standard refrain at the end of a book of Psalms.<sup>17</sup>

**Praise ye the LORD.**

<sup>17</sup> 1 Chr 16:36 shows this verse as an integral part of the Psalm, and the addition of the final Hallelu-Yah following this verse reinforces this connection. Compare the last verse of Psalm 72, where the doxology of v. 19 comes before the concluding editorial comment of v. 20. These examples suggest that at least in some cases, the editor found the words of the doxology already in some of the Psalms, and standardized it across the collection.

# Psalms 101-106

## Notes

### ***Quotation of Psalm 102 in Hebrews 1***

Several different views have been taken to explain why the writer of Hebrews sees Psalm 102 as describing the Lord Jesus. The first seems easiest to me.

### **The Promise of the Lord's Advent**

Alford, following Delitzsch, notes the petition in Psalm 102 for the Lord to intervene in history:

Psa 102:13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. ... 16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. 17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD. 19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; 21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; 22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

Psalm 102 answers the question of 101:2, "When wilt thou come unto me?" with the assurance that God will "arise" and intervene for the sake of Zion and his people. The writer understands the coming deliverer to be the Messiah, even when he bears the title of Lord. This would be consistent with a wholistic reading of Book 4, with the promises of the Lord's coming to rule in 96 and 98, followed in 101 by David's reappearance. The shift between a distinction between the Lord and his Messiah and their identification is a recurring characteristic of the Psalter. Throughout the Psalms, the functions of the Messianic king are sometimes assigned to a descendant of David who is clearly distinct from the Lord (e.g., Psalms 2, 72, 75, 89, 101), but at other times to the Lord himself (ascending to Zion in Psalm 24; reigning and coming to judge in Psalms 93-99). This dualism reflects the nature of Messiah as both son of man and son of God, and the writer of Hebrews is willing to see any Psalm that talks about the intervention of God in history as a manifestation of the Messiah. On this view, the LXX's addition of *κυριος* helps suggest the application, but is not the reason for it.

Alford:

The account to be given of Psalms 102 seems to be as follows: according to its title it is "a prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." It was probably written during the Babylonian exile (cf. 2Ki 1:14-15) by one who "waited for the consolation of Israel." That consolation was to be found only in Israel's covenant God, and the Messiah Israel's deliverer. And the trust of Israel in this her Deliverer was ever directed to the comfort of her sons under the immediate trouble of the time, be that what it might. As generations went on, more and more was revealed of the Messiah's office and work, and the hearts of God's people entered deeper and deeper into the consolation to be derived from the hope of His coming. Here then we have this sorrowing one casting himself on the mercy of the great Deliverer, and extolling His faithfulness and firmness over, and as distinguished from, all the works of His hands. To apply then these words to the

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Redeemer, is to use them in their sense of strictest propriety. See Delitzsch's note, where the whole matter is discussed.

Delitzsch:

Our author interprets the Psalm as speaking of Christ, because he is fully assured that the advent (*παρουσία*) of Jehovah, for which the psalmist, as one of those servants of Jehovah who carried in their hearts the burden of the afflictions of Jerusalem and her exiled people, is there praying, is an advent already vouchsafed in the first coming of the Lord Jesus, though its glorious completion is still waited for.

### Two Meanings of *προς τον υιον* in v. 8

Another approach understands the quotation from Psalm 45 to be addressed *to* the Son, but that in 101 to be spoken *concerning* him. The idea is that Messiah's authority rests on the eternal power of God. While Heb 1:8 quotes Psalm 45, the theme is the same as 101, the integrity of the Messianic ruler. In its context, Ps 102 provides the confidence of divine support that permits the exercise of royal integrity without fear of consequences, and one might suggest that Hebrews is repeating this argument, substituting Psalm 45, with its direct ascription of deity to the Messiah, for 101. Thus J. Barmby in the Pulpit Commentary:

But we have still to account for the apparent application to the Son of what, in the original psalm, shows no sign of being addressed to him. One view is that there is no intention in the Epistle of quoting it as addressed to him, the phrase, *πρὸς τὸν υἱόν* (as has been seen) not of necessity implying such intention. According to this view, the point of the quotation is that the Messianic salvation is made to rest solely on the eternity and immutability of God—of him who, as he created all at first, so, though heaven and earth should pass away, remains unchanged. And the character of the salvation, thus regarded, is conceived to carry with it the transcendent super-angelic dignity of its accomplisher, the SON.

But while both meanings of *προς τον υιον* are legitimate, it is doubtful that a single instance, with two complements joined only by *και*, could be understood in different senses.

### Change of Speaker within the Psalm

F.F. Bruce takes another tack. He notes that in the LXX, *ענה* in v. 23 (MT 24) is translated not as “he weakened” but *απεκριθη* “he answered,” and that what follows is spoken by God to someone, whom (as in Psalm 45) he calls God. The challenge here is that the interpretation sets the MT against the LXX.

### Other Views

Farrar in Cambridge Greek Testament:

The word “Lord” is not in the original, but it is in the LXX.; and the Hebrew Christians who already believed that it was by Christ that “God made the world” (see note on Heb 1:2) would not dispute the Messianic application of these words to Him,

RT France mentions Bruce's approach, but also the creation linkage noted by Farrar.



## Psalms 101-106

### ***Calls to Thank, Bless, and Praise***

How are the imperatives of *יָדָה*, *בָּרַךְ*, and *הִלֵּל* related semantically?

Figure 8 gives density plots for the imperatives of the three verbs directed to the people with reference to the Lord (as well as the passive ptc of *בָּרַךְ*). Praise *הִלֵּל* is the most common, but *בָּרַךְ* is most widely distributed throughout the Psalter.

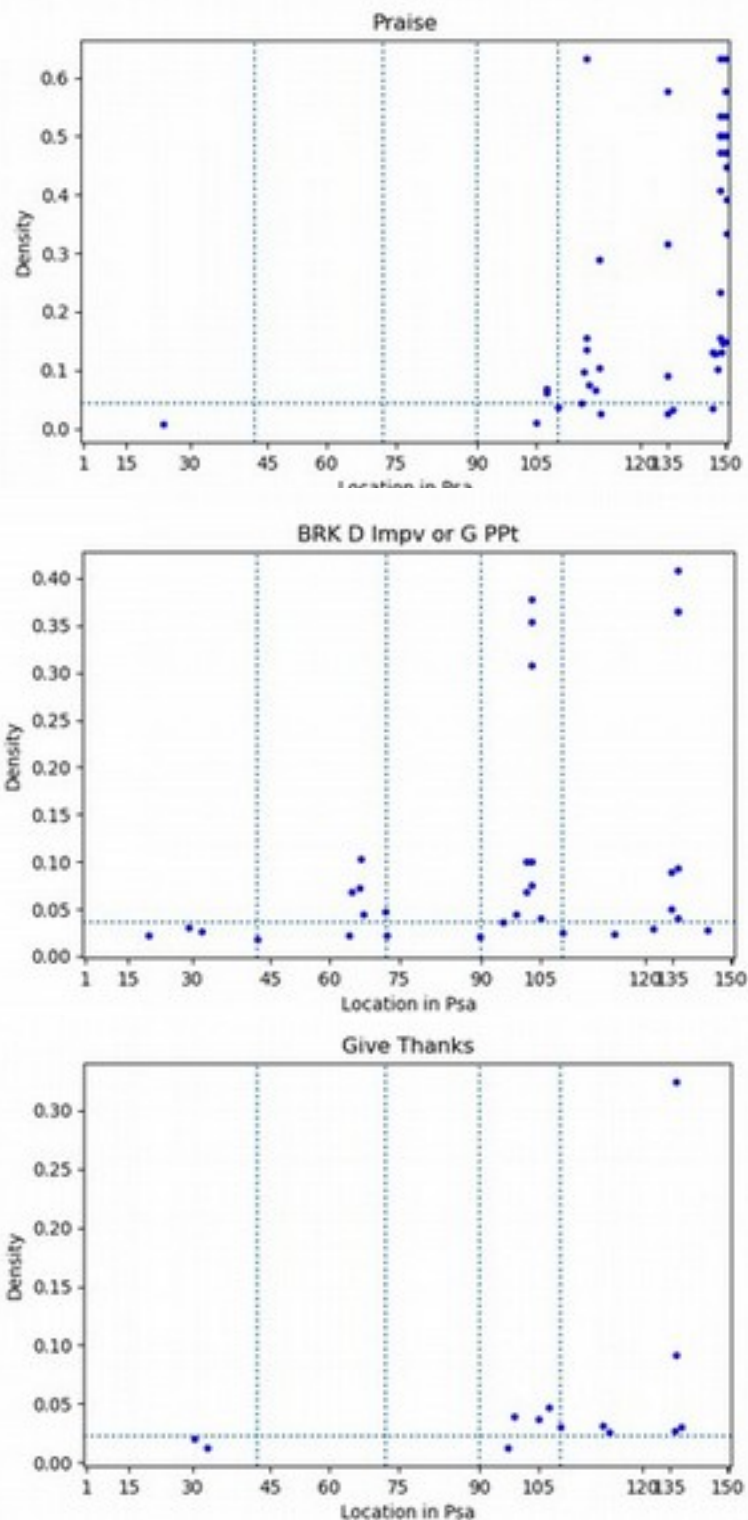
Some Psalms include multiple of these terms. Psalm 100 combines all three roots:

Psa 100:4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving *יָדָה*, and into his courts with praise *הִלֵּל*: be thankful *יָדָה* unto him, and bless *בָּרַךְ* his name.

So does Psalm 106, combining *הִלֵּל* with *בָּרַךְ* in v. 1 and with *יָדָה* in v. 48. We find pairings of *הִלֵּל* with *בָּרַךְ* (in 104:1, 35; 135:1, 3, 19, 20, 21) or with *יָדָה* (in 105:1,45), but usually not *בָּרַךְ* and *יָדָה* together, and even in 106, *הִלֵּל* is closer to each of the others than they are to one another.

This distribution, along with the relative numbers of the terms (imperative of *הִלֵּל* appears 50x, compared with 19 for “bless” and 13 for “thank”) suggests that *הִלֵּל* is the generic term, while the others are specialized. *יָדָה* focuses on praise that concerns God’s intrinsic character (e.g., “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever”), while *בָּרַךְ* focuses on his blessings to us (Psalm 103). (See also discussion on Psalm 100:1.)

Two verses other than Psalm 100:4 combine *בָּרַךְ* and *יָדָה*: The sons of Korah sing of the wealthy man,



*Figure 8: Praise Vocabulary in Psalms*

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Psa 49:18 Though while he lived he blessed בָּרַךְ his soul: and men will praise יְהוָה thee, when thou doest well to thyself.

This is consistent with the proposed distinction: “he blessed his soul,” either “gave blessings to it” or “thanked himself for taking care of himself,” while “men will praise thee,” honor your on character for taking care of yourself.

The other place is David’s Psalm of praise תְּהִלָּה,

Psa 145:9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. 10 All thy works shall praise יְהוָה thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless בָּרַךְ thee.

If we read this chiastically, as suggested by the repetition of כְּלִי־מַעֲשֵׂי (all thy/his works), the praise rendered by God’s works is for his character (his tender mercies), while the blessing from his saints is for his goodness.

We can also look at LXX renderings:

	(επ)αινεω	καυχασμαι	αινεσις	καυχημα	ευλογ*	*ομολογ*
הלל	81	9				
תהילה			25	6		
ברך					319	
יהוה						83
תודה			20			7

The doxology at the end of the first four books is marked with בָּרַךְ:

Psa 41:13 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen. *Following recounting of God’s blessings on the one who cares for the poor*

Psa 72:18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. 19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. *Following God’s blessings on Messiah’s kingdom*

Psa 89:52 Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen. *Following Ethan’s lament*

Psa 106:47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks יְהוָה unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise תְּהִלָּה. 48 Blessed בָּרַךְ be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise הַלֵּל ye the LORD.

The fourth combines בָּרוּךְ with הַלֵּל.

The place of the doxology in the fifth book is taken by the last five Psalms, which do not describe people blessing the Lord at all, but instead repeatedly exhort us to praise הַלֵּל him. But just before them, in Psalm 145, David four times describes his blessing toward the Lord, almost as though 145 is the proper ending of Book 5, and 146-150 then conclude the entire Psalter.

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### ***Subject and Predicate in 104:4***

AV follows the LXX interpretation, in which (cognitive) angels lie behind the wind and lightning, and is adopted by Heb 1:7. Most modern translations reverse the order, for example, the NET Bible,

Psa 104:4 He makes the winds his messengers, and the flaming fire his attendant.

An excellent study on the problem is L.T. Swinson, TRINJ 28NS (2007) 215-228, He observes the parallels between Psalms 103 and 104 in their opening and closing, and the emphasis at the end of 103 on the “angels,” God’s “ministers,” in an unambiguous context. The LXX translation (and the AV) reflects sensitivity to this context that the alternative translation neglects. In addition, seeing (cognitive) beings inhabiting the heavenly realm is in line with the overall purpose of 104 to outline the benefits of creation, not just offer a description of it.

### ***Changes in Grammatical Person in Psalm 104***

The Psalm switches frequently between addressing God in 2s and speaking about him in 3s. Mitchell<sup>18</sup> suggests that this kind of sudden change may reflect the roles of the Precentor (המנצח) and chorus, respectively:

Abrupt changes in the sense also suggest a change of speaker. In Psalm 91.9, the first half addresses the Holy One, while the next half must address a human being.

Because you, LORD, are my refuge; You have made Elyon your dwelling (Ps. 91.9).

Clearly, an individual – a precentor or perhaps a king – addressed the first line to the LORD, while the chorus sang the second line, addressing the first speaker.

18 Mitchell, David C.. The Songs of Ascents: Psalms 120 to 134 in the Worship of Jerusalem's Temples (Page 123). Campbell Publications.