

# Psalms 111-117

## Psalms 111-117

### Overview

We now come to the second Hallelu-Yah section in Psalms (the first was 104-106) (Table 1, chart). Figure 1 (chart) shows how this expression occurs in Psalms only at the end of the book. It occurs elsewhere in the Bible only in the Revelation, which we shall also consider.

These seven Psalms consist of two triads marked with the phrase “Praise ye the Lord” (Hallelu-Yah), surrounding one Psalm (114) that lacks it (Table 2, chart). Like the first Hallelu-Yah section (104-106), the first two Psalms of the triad have Hallelu-Yah at one extreme, while the last begins and ends with it (like all the other Hallelu-Yah Psalms, 135; 146-150). The two triads share a number of features:

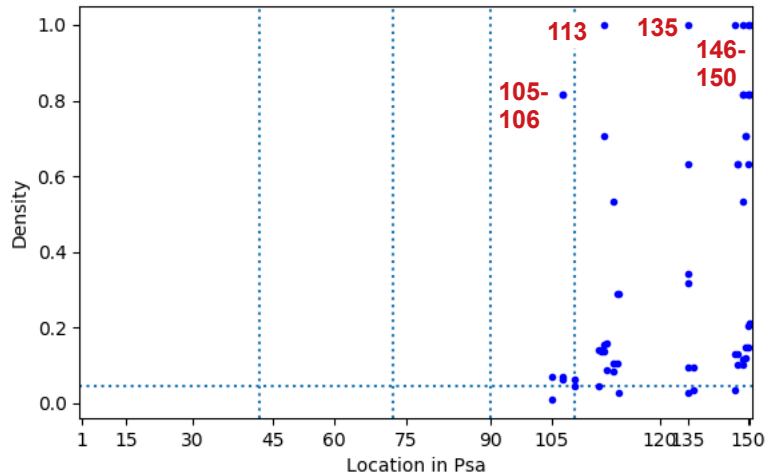
- references to Ex 34:6 (God’s grace, mercy, loyal love, and truth) ...
- ... and to God’s name (cf. Ex 34:5),
- the extent of his covenant not only to his people but to all nations,
- the response of trust by his subjects.

The first Psalm in each triad, and 114, focus on what God does (contrasted, in 115, with the impotence of idols). The second Psalm emphasizes man’s response of trust, obedience, and worship. The final Psalm extends this joyful relation of divine care and human response to all nations.

Surprisingly, Psalm 114, in the center, does not use the phrase at all. Its focus

107, Suffering, coming to the land: ידה	120-134, Ascents: Coming to the Temple
	135-137, ידה, ברך, memory of suffering
108-110, Psalms of David	138-144, Psalms of David
111-112, Hallelu-Yah; Acrostic (111 Works of the Lord)	145, David; Acrostic (Works of the Lord)
113-117, Hallelu-Yah	146-150, Hallelu-Yah
<b>118, Messiah ← Pair → 119, Torah (Acrostic)</b>	

*Table 1: Structure of Book 5*



*Figure 1: Hallelu-Yah (Praise ye the Lord) in Psalms*

God’s Works	111 (Acrostic) Hallelu-Yah Righteous, Gracious, Merciful God’s Works His People The Nations His Name	114 Physical Creation	115 Thy Name Loyal Love and Truth The Nations Trust in the Lord Works of Men’s Hands Hallelu-Yah
Man’s Response	112 (Acrostic) Hallelu-Yah Gracious, Merciful, Righteous Trusting in the Lord		116 Call on Name of Lord Gracious, Righteous, Merciful All his People Hallelu-Yah
Universal Praise	113 Hallelu-Yah Name of the Lord All Nations His People Hallelu-Yah		117 Hallelu-Yah All Nations Loyal Love and Truth Hallelu-Yah

*Table 2: Structure of the Second Hallelu-Yah Section*

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is on the physical creation. God’s power extends there, but the privilege of responding in praise belongs to us.

An important feature of Book 5, not seen since Book 1, is the acrostic, which begins each clause, verse, or paragraph with a successive letter of the alphabet. In Book 1, Psalms 9-10 (a unit), 25, 34, and 37 were acrostics. In Book 5, 111, 112, 145, and especially 119 use this device. The acrostics in Book 5 other than 119 come at corresponding places in the two panels, though not within the same elements: 111-112 begin the Hallelu-Yahs, while 145 ends the Psalms of David.

### Psalms 111 and 112, Man in the Image of God

These Psalms form a pair. Not only are both (alone in 111-117) acrostics, but they share many expressions (Table 3, chart). Together, they form a peak in the entire Psalms for the notion of eternity (Figure 2, chart).

Some of the repeated elements have the same application in both

Psalms, but others describe the Lord in Psalm 111, while in 112 they describe the righteous man. Compare God’s righteousness in 111:3 with man’s in 112:3, 9. The righteous man gives God the fear and delight he deserves, and shows mercy (112:5) describes the righteous man using a key root from the description of God in 111:4 and 112:4. Together, these two Psalms envision a man who manifests the image of God and seeks to carry out God’s will. This is man as he was created to be (Gen 1:26), reflecting God’s glory and

completely submissive to God’s will. Beginning in the Garden of Eden, man completely failed in this responsibility, so God sent his son, the Lord Jesus to show an example of perfect humanity and to redeem us from our sin. Our Savior is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), and the purpose of our salvation is to conform us to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18), and thus to restore the lost image of God in us.<sup>1</sup>

	Ps 111	Ps 112
Our Response to God		
Delight חפץ	The Lord’s works (2)	The Lord’s word (1)
Fear of the Lord	5, 9, 10	1 (and not of adversaries, 7, 8)
Our Similarity to God		
Things that endure forever, עמד לעד	God’s righteousness (3) and praise (10)	man’s righteousness (112:3, 9)
“Gracious and full of compassion” (Ex 34:6)	4	4
Remembering זכר	God’s wonderful works (4)	The righteousness of the just (6)

Table 3: Parallels between Psalms 111 and 112

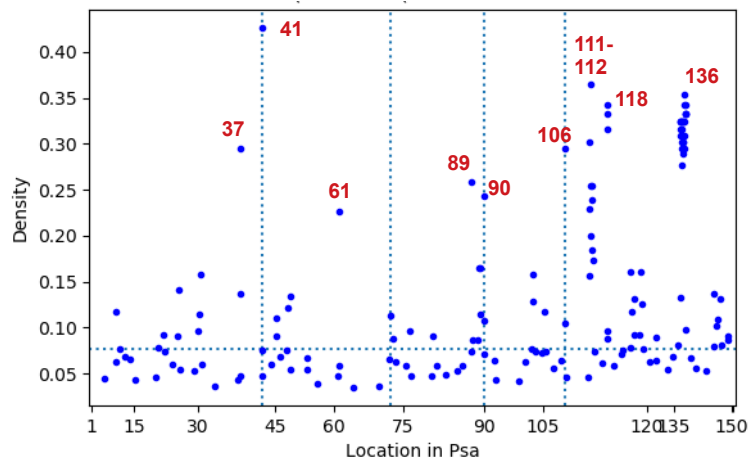


Figure 2: Words for "Forever" (לעד or עולם) in Psalms

1 For more on this summary of the Bible, see <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/KingdomOfGod/>

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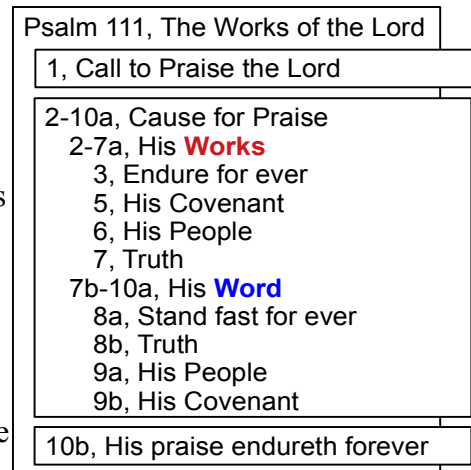
The Hallelu-Yah that marks both Psalms is the generic verb of praise, but consistent with their shift of focus from God to man, the two Psalms emphasize different kinds of praise. Psalm 111 begins, “I will praise the Lord,” using the verb ידה (Strong 3034) that means to confess or acknowledge God’s wonderful attributes. Psalm 112 begins by declaring the happiness (“Blessed” אשׁרי) of the person who follows the Lord. This is not the same as the verb used in “Bless the Lord,” but it does emphasize the blessings that God gives to us.

So here, having just contemplated our king and priest in Psalm 110, we are reminded of the character of God (111) and how we are to imitate him (112). An acrostic communicates a sense of completeness: “I have discussed this subject from A to Z.” By using this device here, the poet is saying, “I want to tell you all about who God is and how we should be in return.”

### **Psalm 111, The Works of the Lord**

This Psalm is a call for praise, with the classic call-cause structure (Figure 3, chart). The opening call is echoed by a final declaration that his praise lasts forever. These framing statements both use the root הלל (Strong 1984) for general praise. The center section gives two causes for praise: God’s works (2-7a) and his word (7b-10a). Both halves mention the duration of his works or word, respectively; their truth, his people, and the covenant he has with them.

**111:1 Praise ye the LORD. I will praise ידה the LORD with (in) my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.**--The first verse focuses the nature of the praise being offered; “I will praise” uses the verb ידה (Strong 3034) that indicates worshipping the Lord for his intrinsic character.



*Figure 3: Structure of Psalm 111*

This praise develops in three stages, marked by repetition of the preposition ׀. First, it is “with/in my whole heart,” the inner resolve of the speaker. But by its very nature, praise must be public, and the second half of the verse describes two successively larger audiences.<sup>2</sup> The first, translated “assembly” (סוד Strong 5475) refers to a close intimate circle of friends or confidants, while the second, “congregation” (עדה, Strong 5712) is the larger gathering of the people. A major purpose of the gatherings of God’s people in both Israel and the church is corporate praise. Praise is not just a private meditation, nor is it enough to praise God privately with a few friends. Like the law of God, praise is to occupy us both publicly and privately:

Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

The center of the Psalm gives the cause for praise, describing first the works, then the words of the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See notes for the syntax with a single preposition governing two nouns.

<sup>3</sup> As the discussion below shows, many of the terms and concepts in the central two paragraphs appear in roughly chiasmic order, but important components (e.g., the eternity of his righteousness and of his covenant) fall out of order.

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This Psalm offers one of the densest discussions of the works of the Lord in Psalms (Figure 4, chart). Contrast the use of this concept through Psalms: in the first two books, we read of the works of the Lord and of the wicked, confronting one another, and book 3, the book of desolation, barely mentions them at all, but they are a central theme in the praise offered to the Lord in books 4 and 5.

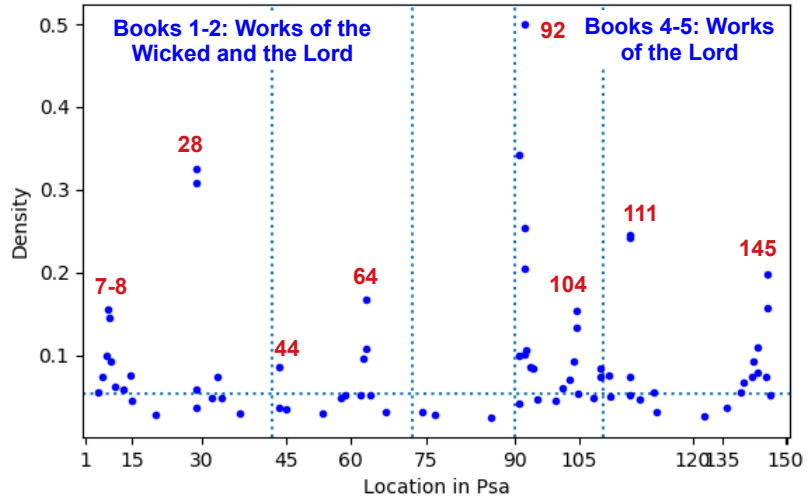


Figure 4: Works (מעשה or פעל) in Psalms

### 2 The works מעשה of the LORD are great, sought out

**of all them that have pleasure therein.**--The appropriate use of the works of the Lord is to seek them out and take pleasure in them. This is the foundation of true science—a desire to “come, behold the works of the Lord” (Ps 46:8) and adore him for them.

### 3 His work פעל is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4 He hath made his wonderful works פעל to be remembered:

--To develop the parallel between God’s words and his works, one might think that God’s works endure forever. But they do not:

Psa 102:25 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.

In spite of this, they will be *remembered*, and the righteousness that governed his creation of them will last forever.

**the LORD is gracious and full of compassion חנון ורחום.**--Here, as in each of these six Hallelu-Yah Psalms except 113, we have an echo of Ex 34:6, God’s wonderful declaration of his name to Moses on the occasion of his forgiveness of dealing with Israel over the sin of the golden calf.

**5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.**--These works are governed by the promises that he makes, his practice of binding himself with covenants.

**6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works מעשה, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.**--This covenant is what establishes a particular group as “his people,” whom he favors over all others. (But the concluding Psalms of each trio of Hallelu-Yah Psalms remind us of “all nations” [same word גוים Strong 1471 as here], and in 117 they are invited to join in the praise.)

**7 The works מעשה of his hands are verity and judgment;**--The ultimate manifestation of his works are the true judgment that he brings.

Now we turn to the words of the Lord, described with many of the same terms.

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**all his commandments are sure. 8 They stand fast for ever and ever**--God's works endure only through the memory of them (vv. 3-4), but his words stand forever, without any qualification. Isaiah develops this contrast:

Isa 40:8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. **and are done in truth and uprightness**--Truth characterizes his word as well as his works (v. 7)

**9 He sent redemption unto his people**--As in v. 6, we learn of those whom he has chosen for himself.

**he hath commanded his covenant for ever**--Again we hear of his covenant (v. 5); again it is something that lasts forever.

**holy and reverend is his name**--Corresponding to the quotation of Ex 34:6 in v. 4, we have God's name, which is what he was declaring to Moses when he made the promise of 34:6.

**10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments**--v. 2 told us the appropriate use of the works of the Lord (to seek them out and take pleasure in them). Here is the appropriate use of his word: to do it.

**his praise יהיילה endureth for ever**--We have learned of several things that endure forever: God's righteousness (v. 3), his commandments (v. 8), his covenant (v. 9). Since the things for which we praise him endure for ever, it is only fitting that our praise should also continue for ever. We observed in Figure 2 that this Psalm and 112 emphasize "forever." In this Psalm, what lasts forever is God's works and words, and the praise that we should return to him for them.

### **Psalm 112, The Blessings of Godliness**

Now the focus shifts from the Lord to his people; from what he has done to what we do. Eternity is still in focus (Figure 2), but now what lasts forever is the righteousness of the upright man.

The Psalm begins and ends with the consequences of righteousness and wickedness (Figure 5, chart). Between these two, three paragraphs that describe the wealth of the righteous, how he shares it, and how his righteousness lasts forever alternate with two statements about how the Lord delivers him from evil. These are complementary: vv. 3, 5-6, and 9 show how the righteous man cares for the poor, while vv. 4 and 7-8 show the Lord caring for him.

To emphasize the parallels, we'll consider the matching verses together.

#### **112:1 Praise ye the LORD.**

We begin with the consequences of following the Lord.

**Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments**--Both conditions of blessing echo Psalm 111. We read in 5, 9, and 10 of how we should fear him,



Figure 5: Structure of Psalm 112

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and in v. 2 of those who take pleasure (צִפְּקָה, Strong 2656, same as here) in his works. Now we consider someone who demonstrates this fear and delight.

Note the paradox of combining these two attitudes. We are to fear the Lord, and yet delight in his commandments. He is terrible and overwhelming ... and fascinating.

2Co 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror (fear) of the Lord, we persuade men; ... 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us;

**2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.**--The reward to such a person is his posterity.

**10 The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.**--By contrast with the delight experienced by the righteous, the wicked is grieved, grinds his teeth, and his desire is frustrated. By contrast with the promise of a blessed generation to the righteous, the wicked will melt away.

Now consider the three paragraphs that talk about wealth and eternal righteousness, 3, 5-6, and 9. We might compare these with the Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread."

**3 Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.**--Here is the basic statement of the theme. The righteous man possesses wealth, and his righteousness is eternal.

**5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion. 6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.**--In the second reference, the wealth is now being distributed, and it is not just his righteousness that lasts, but the remembrance of him as a righteous person. Note also the word "showeth favor" חָנַן, which is the word translated "gracious" of God in 111:4 and 112:4. In addition, it is not just his righteousness that endures for ever, but the remembrance of him as a righteous person.

**9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.**--The third reference combines the distribution of wealth from v. 5 with the everlasting righteousness of v. 3, and adds the promise of honor.

The other two paragraphs describe how God delivers the righteous from difficulty, which we recall when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

**4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: *he is gracious, and full of compassion and righteous.***--To whom does the last half of the verse refer? In English, it is natural to understand "he" as referring to "the upright." But "the upright" is actually plural, while the descriptive terms in the second half are singular. In addition, they repeat the description of God from 111:4.

It is true that the righteous should imitate God in grace, compassion, and righteousness, and v. 5 "showeth favour" makes just this point. But it is best to understand "light" here as a metaphor for the Lord, as in Psa 27:1, "The LORD is my light and my salvation," and then understand the second half of the verse as detailing his attributes that encourage the righteous man in dark times.

**7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. 8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies.**--Again, the Lord takes care of his saints in times of sorrow and delivers them, allowing them to be confident.

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### Psalms 113-118 and Passover

The symmetrical distribution of the phrase “Hallelu-Yah” and other key terms clearly shows that the editor intends us to see 111-117 as a unit (Table 2). However, historically the Jews have sung 113-118 together at major feasts, notably the Passover, singing 113-114 before the first grace and 115-118 after the conclusion. Figure 6 (chart) shows this grouping.

When we encounter alternative analyses of the text, we should pause to consider the claims of each of them.

107, Suffering, coming to the land: ידה	120-134, Ascents: Coming to the Temple 135-137, ידה, ברך, memory of suffering
108-110, Psalms of David	138-144, Psalms of David
111-112, Hallelu-Yah; Acrostic (111 Works of the Lord)	145, David; Acrostic (Works of the Lord)
113-117, Hallelu-Yah	146-150, Hallelu-Yah
118, Messiah ← Pair →	119, Torah (Acrostic)

Figure 6: The Passover Hallel

Our analysis, like Robertson, recognizes the recurring triples in 104-106, 111-113, and 115-117. The corresponding themes between the successive members of 111-113 and 115-117 (Table 2) create an ABC-D-ABC pattern that reinforces this division, and 114, which lacks the “Hallelu-Yah,” because it concerns the Lord’s works in physical creation rather than his actions toward people, has a climactic function.

The traditional Jewish focus on 113-118 as a unit breaks this symmetry.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, even though the Jews call this collection “the Hallel” or “the Egyptian Hallel” (because of the focus on deliverance from Egypt in 114), this division leaves out the first two Hallelu-Yah Psalms (111-112) and adds 118, which does not use the expression.

Psalms is a composite book. The current structure is due to someone after the return from Babylon, perhaps Ezra. But he definitely worked with pre-existing Psalms, and he may have worked with pre-existing collections as well. The Jewish tradition of reading 113-118 together may antedate the final compilation of book, at which point the editor worked them into the larger structure that we have outlined.

So in the current structure of Book 5, 111-117 form a unit, but we can also recognize the Jewish custom historically of reciting 113-118 as a unit. This custom probably extends back to the first century. It is documented as a standard part of the Passover in the Mishnah (Pesahim 5:7), and there described as part of the practice in the second temple, before AD 70.

Recognizing the historical unity of 113-118 is important because Matthew records that our Lord ended the Last Supper with a hymn:

Mat 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

It is likely that our Lord sang these Psalms as part of his final observation of the passover at the last supper. As we go through these Psalms, it will prove fruitful to think about how our Lord would have understood them the night before his sacrifice.<sup>5</sup>

4 Hayes argues for the unity of 113-118 on discourse grounds: *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 9 (1999): 145-156. She argues, “A stretch of text is recognized as a discourse when it contains elements of cohesion, coherence, and prominence.” But something else is needed when the discourse is embedded in a larger composition: it must form a functional component with its context. She does not address this aspect, and her analysis does not explain the missing pieces that it leaves behind, in this case, 111-112,

5 Philip S. Ross, *Anthems for a Dying Lamb*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2017.

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### Psalm 113, God Stoops to Save

The Psalm is a classic hymn, with calls to praise (a double Hallelu-Yah) surrounding a description of the cause for praise (Figure 7, chart). The Cause for Praise describes God's self-humiliation in order to raise up his people.

**113:1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.**--Three times the Psalmist directs our attention toward the name of the Lord, a theme that we see as well in 111:9, 115:1, and three times in 116. This is the only one of the framing Psalms (111-113, 115-117) that does not quote part of Exod 34:6, but Moses describes the contents of that verse as "the name of the Lord" (34:5), and the repetition here grounds this Psalm, with the other Hallelu-Yah Psalms, in that revelation of the Lord's character.<sup>6</sup>

In the Bible, a name represents a person's character. Giving a name demonstrates authority over them, and names are changed to reflect milestones in a person's life. So praising the Lord's name amounts to praising him for what he has revealed himself to be.

**2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.**--Throughout these first three verses, "praise" is לָלַח (Strong 1984), the generic term for praise. Now the Psalmist is more specific, blessing the Lord, that is, recognizing the benefits he gives his people.

**3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised.**--This is the middle of three instances of this expression in the Bible. The first describes the scope of God's judgment, introducing Asaph's Psalm summoning people before him:

Psa 50:1 The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth **from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.**

Now the phrase describes the extent of his praise, a theme continued by Malachi:

Mal 1:11 For **from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same** my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

**4 The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.**--From "the nations [heathen]" of 111:6, our vision expands to "all nations." The reason for us to bless God is his exalted station. The benefit that brings us, comes in the next two verses.

**5 Who is like unto the LORD our God,**--Sixteen other times the OT asks, "Who is like God," and twelve times it asserts, "There is none like God" (see note).<sup>7</sup> The first four instances are describing God's judgments over the Egyptians, e.g., at the Red Sea,

Exo 15:11 **Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?**

All of these other instances emphasize God's greatness, his power, his wisdom. But our Psalm

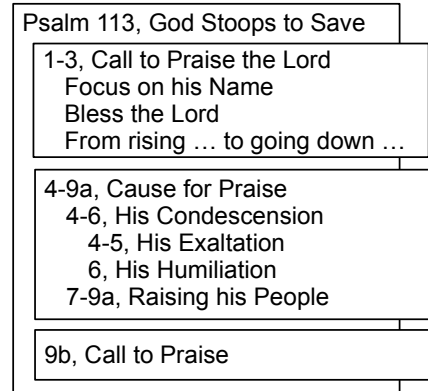


Figure 7: Structure of Psalm 113

<sup>6</sup> In the structure of 111, the reference to the Lord's name in v. 9 corresponds to the quotation from 34:6 in v. 4.

<sup>7</sup> In 1 Sa 2:2, Hannah uses the assertive form to celebrate the Lord's power in bringing down the mighty and exalting the humble, a parallel that may anticipate the direct quotation of her Song in vv. 7-9.



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has a different focus, captured in the next two clauses:

**who dwelleth on high, 6 Who humbleth *himself* to behold *the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!***--The construction of these two clauses is distinctive<sup>8</sup> and parallel: he causes to be high in order to dwell; he causes to be low in order to behold. The first clause is clearly reflexive: he exalts himself upon his heavenly throne, and we should understand the second as reflexive as well (see note). The first clause is like all the other instances of God's incomparability, celebrating his exaltation above all other gods. But the second clause is without parallel: he is incomparable in his self-abasement, his willingness to humble himself to deal with his creation.

God does not just humble himself to satisfy his curiosity. The verb "to behold" רָאָה (Strong 7200) is the common verb for "to see," but sometimes has the additional sense "to see to, tend to, deal with." A clear instance of this usage concerns Joseph in prison:

Gen 39:23 The keeper of the prison **looked not** to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

Moses does not mean here that the keeper was unaware of what was going on in the prison, but that he didn't have to intervene in anything, because Joseph kept it all under control. So here, the God who exalts himself to reign, also humbles himself to deal with issues on earth.

Verses 7-9 tell us why God would act in this incomparable way. They are drawn from the Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2.

**7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; 8 That he may set *him* with princes, even with the princes of **his people**. 9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.**--But the Psalmist is selective. Hannah's Song has a regular structure. She describes how the Lord humbles some people and raises up others. Every positive action has its negative counterpart (Table 4, chart). But the Psalmist completely ignores the part of the Song of Hannah that describes how the Lord humbles the proud, and selects two of the positive promises.

The Psalmist modifies Hannah's words in v. 8. She wrote of the poor and beggar that God "set them among princes" (1 Sam 2:8). The Psalmist adds, "... the princes of his people." God's people are already in a privileged position. The poor and needy that God condescends to raise up are not yet in this position, but through the Lord's self-abasement, they are raised up to equal standing with them. Together with the universal scope of the praise anticipated in v. 3, this verse anticipates a day when God brings the "all nations" of v. 4 to worship him.

It is difficult to read this Psalm without thinking of our Lord. The NT repeatedly emphasizes how he humbled himself in order to raise us up.

2Co 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Phi 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

8 Only in these two clauses, in the entire Hebrew Bible, do we find a definite Hiphil ms participle in the construct followed by ל and an infinitive construct.

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The Lord humbles ...	... and exalts
4 The bows of the mighty men <i>are</i> broken, →	and they that stumbled are girded with strength.
5 <i>They that were</i> full have hired out themselves for bread; →	and <i>they that were</i> hungry ceased: ↓
and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. ↓	<b>so that the barren hath born seven;</b> ←
6 The LORD killeth, →	and maketh alive:
he bringeth down to the grave, →	and bringeth up.
7 The LORD maketh poor, →	and maketh rich:
he bringeth low, →	and lifteth up. <b>8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes,</b> and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth <i>are</i> the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. ↓
and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. ↓	9 He will keep the feet of his saints, ←
10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; →	and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

*Table 4: Reversals in the Song of Hannah*

As our Lord sings this hymn at the beginning of the Passover meal, he knows the sacrifice he was about to make. He is the Lord who, though enthroned in highest heaven, yet humbles himself to raise us up from the poverty of our sin. Other passages say that God is incomparable because he delivers his people, but only here are we told that he humbles himself in order to do this great work. In the face of such love, we must conclude with the Psalmist,

### **Praise ye the LORD.**

Psalm 111 had an exclusive tone, describing how Israel dispossessed the Gentiles:

111:6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

In contrast, Psalm 113, the last Psalm of the first trio (Table 2), anticipates a day when everyone under the sun worships the Lord (v. 3), and when the beggars of the Gentiles join “the princes of his people” (v. 8). The last Psalm of the second trio ends the same way.

## **Psalm 117, Call to Universal Worship**

This Psalm is the shortest chapter in the Bible. Structurally, it is an ABA chiasm, two calls to praise the Lord surrounding a quotation from Ex 34:6.

**117:1 O praise the LORD,<sup>9</sup> all ye nations: praise him שִׁבְחֵהוּ, all ye peoples.** --“People,” like “nations,” is plural. Like Psalm 113, this Psalm looks forward to the salvation of the Gentiles.

9 הללו את־יהוה rather than הללו־יהוה as in all other instances. This variant also occurs in Jer 20:13.

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### **2 For his merciful kindness **חסד** is great toward us: and the truth **אמת** of the LORD**

**endureth for ever.**--The Lord's "kindness ... and truth" are from Ex 34:6, where our version translates, "abundant in goodness and truth." We are not surprised to hear an echo of the Lord's self-revelation to Moses in these Hallelu-Yah Psalms, but it is remarkable that those who are here invited to celebrate this character of God are not just Israelite, but "all ye nations, ... all ye peoples." Redeemed by the condescending God, they take their place among the princes of God's people and raise their voices in celebrating the majesty of his forgiveness. What more can they do than pick up the theme of this entire section:

**Praise ye the LORD.**--On our Lord's lips at the Last Supper, this Psalm would remind him that the flock that he was about to redeem included "other sheep, not of this fold" (John 10:16).

### **Psalm 114, Past and Future Judgment**

This Psalm is alone among 111-117 in lacking a "Hallelu-yah." The reason appears to be that it discusses the submission of physical creation, rather than people, to the Lord. The creation is as subject to him as we are, but unlike us, it cannot praise him. It is also the only one of this group that does use the name LORD (יהוה); "Lord" in v. 7 is אדון, sovereign master. The name "Jehovah" is intimately tied up with God's covenant with his people, redeeming them from Egypt (Ex 6:3), and his power over the physical elements goes far back before that.

The Psalm is a simple chiasm (Figure 8, table), focusing on the Lord's rule in 1-2 and 7-8, and looking at the non-human objects of that rule in a statement and follow-up question in 3-6.

#### Psalm 114, Past and Future Judgments

- 1-2, The Lord rules Israel
- 3-4, Description of Water and Land
- 5-6, Question to Water and Land
- 7-8, The Lord rules Water and Land

*Figure 8: Structure of Psalm 114*

**114:1 When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;**--This verse is probably responsible for the adoption of these Psalms for Passover.

**2 Judah was became his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.**--The act of Exodus is what made the nation his people. He purchased them when he redeemed them from the Egyptians:

Isa 43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

And it was at Sinai that he entered into covenant with them:

Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

**3 The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.**--We recognize these events: the crossing of the Red Sea as the people left Egypt, and the Jordan as they entered the land.

**4 The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.**--These are harder to nail down. Certainly, Sinai trembled at the presence of the Lord:

Exo 19:18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and **the whole mount quaked greatly.**

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But the fall of Jericho's wall in Joshua 6 was no doubt accompanied by an earthquake. There was an earthquake when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead:

Mat 28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

The prophets predict earthquakes as a sign of the Lord's future coming:<sup>10</sup>

Hag 2:6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and **I will shake the heavens, and the earth**, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

So the moving mountains not only look back to the Exodus, but also ahead, to the resurrection and the final judgment.

The Psalmist interrogates these natural elements:

**5 What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? 6 Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?--**Why did you move so unnaturally?

**7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;--** The answer is that all creation must tremble at the Lord's presence. It is a terrible time of judgment. Psalm 113 selectively quoted 1 Samuel 2 to emphasize the Lord's exaltation of his people, but here we see that the judgments of that chapter are not lacking in God's final plan.

In spite of this, one incident during the Exodus shows that for his people, his power over creation brings comfort rather than fear:

**8 Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.--**Twice during the Exodus, his ability to break the mountains provided water for the refreshment of his people.

During the Last Supper, when our Lord sang this Psalm, it would have reminded him of the Father's ultimate victory over all creation. It would have encouraged him of God's promise to shake all nations; of the earthquake that would open his tomb, and of the great shaking that would accompany his triumphant return to rule on earth.

### Psalm 115, Whom do you Trust?

The changes in pronouns suggest two groups speaking responsively, "the leader" and "the people."<sup>11</sup> Table 5 (chart) shows three interchanges. Each response by the people presents a key word that the leader picks up in his next statement.

In the first interchange, the leader asks the Lord to defend his name against the mockery of the heathen, who cannot believe in a God whom they cannot see.

**115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy חסד, and for thy truth's אמת sake.--**Petitions to the Lord must be based, not on our comfort, but on

<sup>10</sup> See also Jer 4:24; 10:10; Eze 38:20; Joe 3:16; Zech 14:3; and the end of each series of judgments in the Revelation (8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

<sup>11</sup> Ezra 3:11 gives an example of this responsive singing (where "sang by course" is ענה "answered").

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his glory. Our Lord echoed this when he prayed during Passover week,

Joh 12:27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

“Mercy and truth” are from Ex 34:6, “abundant in goodness and truth.” “Thy name” reminds us that these, like his grace and compassion, declare his character, as 34:5 shows.

Next, he presents the immediate circumstance that leads him to make this petition:

**2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?**--Such taunts<sup>12</sup> reflect a period when the Gentiles have power over Israel, and mock that their invisible God cannot protect them. This may be during the Babylonian captivity, when the physical idols of Babylon have apparently defeated the invisible God of Israel. Rabshakeh once taunted Hezekiah about Jehovah’s weakness before the Assyrian gods. In that case, Rabshakeh was put to shame, but when Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar, the people would have suffered many such taunts.

Now the reference to God turns from second to third person, as the people respond by pointing out the futility of the heathen’s own view of God.

**3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.**--Here is the obvious answer to the taunt, “Where is your God?” “He is in heaven. Where would you expect a true God to be?” And if he allows his people to be oppressed, well, as the leader confessed in v. 1, his objective is not first of all their comfort but his own glory. He does whatever he pleases, and if it pleases the Lord to chastise us, he is none the less God for that.

**4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.**--In the overall organization of 111-117, this Psalm corresponds to 111, the works of the Lord (Table 2, chart). Those works are now contrasted with the impotence of the works of men, even if they pretend to make gods.

**5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.**--The mockery here recalls Isaiah’s taunts against idols in 44:12-20 and 46:1-7. If this Psalm is written during the captivity, then it is likely that the poet here is drawing on Isaiah’s insights.

**8 They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.**--The heathen directed their taunt against Israel’s God, but the people now rebuke, not just the idols, but the people who blindly make them. It is ignorant to think that an idol that depends on me for its existence can somehow help me (cf. Isa 44:18-20). But the idolaters are worse than ignorant. Like their idols, they are deaf, dumb, blind, immobile—in a word, dead.

The memory of this taunt, and of the people’s response, would encourage our Lord. As he hung on the cross, his enemies raised a similar taunt against him, leading him to doubt:

<sup>12</sup> Ps 42:3, 10. 79:10. Jl 2:17. Psalm 79 describes the kind of historical context that brings forth this taunt.

Leader	People
1-2, Request for God’s help as heathen mock the <b>invisible</b> God	3-8, Rebuke to the heathen for <b>trusting</b> their <b>visible</b> gods
9-11, Exhortation to <b>trust</b> in the Lord	12-13, Confidence that the Lord <b>will bless</b>
14-15, Declaration of the Lord’s <b>blessing</b> on <b>heaven</b> and <b>earth</b>	16-18, Recognition of the Lord’s <b>current</b> rule in <b>heaven</b> and provision on <b>earth</b>

*Table 5: Responsive Structure of Psalm 115*

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Mat 27:41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, ... 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. ... 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

The trust of his enemies, like that of the Babylonians, was in the works of men's hands, their temple and its institutions. One of the main charges on which they condemned him, and Stephen after him, was blasphemy against the temple. Yet at the moment of his death, God began the destruction of that temple (Matt 27:51) that was completed less than forty years later through the agency of Titus, and the entire man-made organization of Judaism lay in waste.

Now the leader picks up their reference to the trust of the Gentiles, and urges the faithful to trust, not in the gods of the heathen that surround them in Babylon, but in the Lord.

**9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.**--The repetition highlights three groups: the entire nation, the priests, and "ye that fear the Lord." In the NT, this last expression describes sympathetic Gentiles, those who had not accepted circumcision but who studied the law of God and supported God's people. It is applied to Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2) and the Gentiles in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16, cf. 26, 42). After the universalism of 113:3, and anticipating 117:1, it would be reasonable for the phrase to have this meaning here as well.<sup>13</sup>

The people affirm what the leader has promised, recalling the same three categories.

**12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. 13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.**--The dynamic between 9-11 and 12-13 is critical. It is not enough for us to hear someone say, "The Lord will bless you" We must respond, "Yes, I believe that—he will bless me." Recall our Lord's discussion with Martha at the tomb of Lazarus:

Joh 11:23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. **Believest thou this?**

The people have declared their faith in God's future blessing. Now the leader assures them. Just as he picked up their word "trust" in the second round, so here he picks up their "bless."

**14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. 15 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.**--His promise is for their future.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the people respond with praise, picking up his reference to heaven and earth. They affirm that God's blessing is on them, not only in the future, but even right now.

**16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.**--Here is the core confession of a people in exile, who must put their hope in a God who "is in the heavens" (v. 3) while they suffer on earth. He has given the earth to men, sometimes to wicked men, but he has also provided for us through it.

<sup>13</sup> This triple appears also in 118:2, urging us to recall God's loyal love, and in 135:19, calling us to thank him for his benefits. The sequence makes sense: organic faith leads to correct doctrine, which then leads to blessings.

<sup>14</sup> Note Jehovah as the one "which made heaven and earth." In other ANE cultures these are the original deities, ancestors of all others, but Jehovah is their creator and controls them for his purposes.

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**17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.**--The “dead” refers to the idolaters of v. 8, who are, like their creations, dumb, deaf, blind, and immobile. They do not appreciate the Lord, or the power that he has chosen to give them for his own purposes.

**18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.**--But we, recognizing that he “made heaven and earth,” can bless the Lord even in captivity.

**Praise the LORD.**--This calls for our praise.

### Psalm 116, Calling on the Lord

This Psalm corresponds to 112 (Table 2, chart) in describing our response to the Lord. There, the focus was on godlikeness; here, in praising him.

This Psalm is all about calling on the Lord (Figure 9, chart). The full expression, “call on the name of the Lord,” appears in vv. 4, 13, and 17, while the verb “call” in v. 2 anticipates these later instances. “Speak” in v. 10 is an even more general synonym, and v. 1 recalls a time when the Lord heard “my voice and my supplications.”

The summaries, “voice,” “supplications,” “call,” and “speak,” are associated with motives in 1-2 (love) and 10-11 (faith), while the complete expression appears in longer paragraphs, 3-9 and 12-19. In order to begin and end with praise, he disrupts the temporal order of events, shown by the arrows in Figure 9.

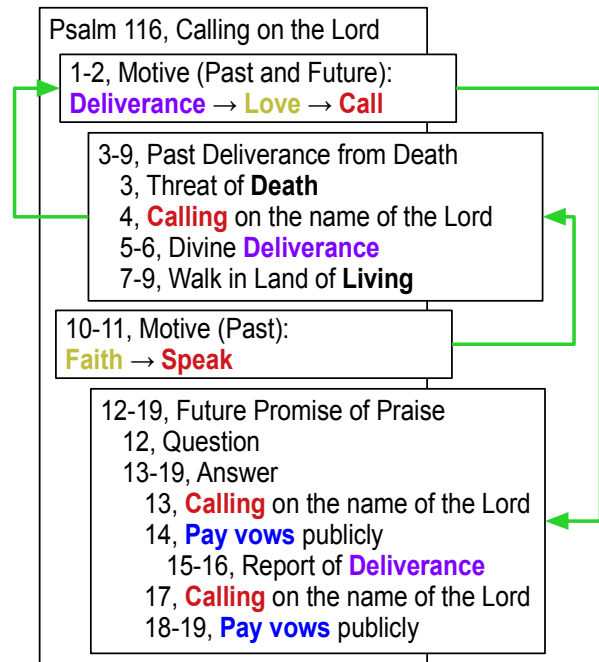


Figure 9: Structure of Psalm 116

If we read chronologically, we start in 10-11. Clinging to faith, the afflicted psalmist cried out. Vv. 3-9 describe that crisis and how the Lord delivered him. 1-2 then report his resulting love toward the Lord and his resolve to call on the Lord, a promise that is developed in 12-19. As it is, he begins (1-2) with a summary of his praise to the Lord (12-19), but interrupts the two by recalling his deliverance (3-9) followed by a summary of that experience (10-11).<sup>15</sup>

The Psalm plays with an ambiguity in the Hebrew expression translated, “call on the name of the Lord.”<sup>16</sup> The expression first appears in the description of Seth and his son Enos:

Gen 4:26 then began men to call upon the name of the Lord

It is common in the Patriarchal accounts.<sup>17</sup> When the verb lacks a direct object (as here), it can have two meanings. One is to ask for something, like Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel: first they, then he, call on the name of their respective deity, asking for fire from heaven.

But the meaning is different when God declares his attributes to Moses in Exodus 34:

<sup>15</sup> The Psalm thus shows the mixture of chiasm and alternation that is common in Paul, AbaB, where one feature is arranged symmetrically and the other translationally. The result is like a two-way table, exploring all combinations of both features. Compare the brainstorming technique of cross-impact matching: R.J. Heuer and R.H. Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011, pp. 104-107.

<sup>16</sup> קרא בשם יהוה. See notes on Gen 4:26, <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/genesis/notes/Genesis4b.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Abraham at Bethel (Gen 12:8; 13:4) and Beer Sheba (21:33); Isaac at Beer Sheba (26:25)

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Exo 34:5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and **proclaimed [called upon] the name of the LORD.**

Here the expression refers to a declaration, not a petition, thus the translation “proclaimed.” Yet it is the same expression used by Elijah on Carmel. Generically, it means “to cry out using the name of the Lord,” in petition or praise (cf. Isa 12:4). We’ll see that the instance in v. 4 is a cry for help, while those in 13 and 15 (and the abbreviated “cry” in v. 2) are the cry of proclamation.

We begin in the middle of the story, with a summary that looks both backward and forward.

**116:1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.**--The Psalmist recalls a time in the past when he cried to the Lord, and the Lord heard him. Because of that deliverance, he is drawn to love the Lord. The sequence is the same as in the NT,

1Jo 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . 19 We love him, because he first loved us.

Biblically, love for God is something that grows out of our awareness that he has delivered us.

**2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.**--

From the past he looks to the future, and promises to “call” for the rest of his life. Because we know what is coming in 12-19, we understand this as the call of proclamation, but it also recognizes that since he has responded to our plea in the past, we can cry to him in the future.

3-9 abounds with suffix verbs and participles, recalling a past struggle.

**3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. 4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.**--Here “call upon the name of the Lord” has the sense of petition. But the expression recalls Ex 34:5, and he continues with 34:6:

**5 Gracious הנוק is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful מרחם.**--Perhaps v. 5 is part of his petition. Having heard from childhood the declaration of God’s character in Exodus 34, in time of trouble he cries out to the Lord, and then quotes 34:6. “Deliver me, O Lord, according to your character as a gracious and compassionate God.”

**6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.**--In Proverbs, “the simple” (see notes) is in between the fool and the prudent or wise. He is not culpable (like the fool), but immature, child-like, naive. Proverbs notes his susceptibility to being deceived:

Pro 14:15 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

This characteristic afflicted the Psalmist. He naively trusted others, who took advantage of him.

**7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. 9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.**--Now he bears witness to the Lord’s deliverance. Having begun with the sorrows of death, he ends with deliverance from death, enjoying the Lord’s presence among the living. God heard his cry, and delivered him, as in v. 1.

**10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: 11 I said in my haste, All men are liars.**--These two verses summarize the testimony about the past in 3-7. His past speech (“have I spoken”) is his cry to the Lord in vv. 4-5. Part of his complaint concerned the deceitfulness of men, something he had discovered by painful experience as one of the “simple”



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(v. 6). What enabled him to make this cry was not his love for the Lord, but his belief. He laid hold of the promise of Exod 34:6, and based on that faith, he cried out to the Lord.

We have already seen in v. 1 that the Lord's gracious response to that cry stimulated his love. He promised in v. 2 to bring praise, and now in 12-18 we hear that praise, with future verbs.

### **12 What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?**

The body of the praise is an uneven chiasm, ABCAB, putting focus on the central element. Let's consider the matching elements.

**13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. ... 17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.**--Recognizing the parallel between these<sup>18</sup> suggests that "the cup of salvation" in v. 13 is a drink offering associated with the thank-offering of v. 17. He promises to present an offering to the Lord and declare his name.

**14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now; ~~in the presence of~~ please guide<sup>19</sup> all his people. ... 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now; ~~in the presence of~~ please guide all his people, 19a In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.**--This offering is in fulfillment of a vow to the Lord that he made while in distress.

Now we come to the central, focal paragraph:

**15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.**--Compare David in Psalm 72,

Ps 72:14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

That is, he will not allow it to be threatened without taking notice. He does sometimes allow his saints to die, but never without taking careful notice, and sometimes (as here) averting it.

**16 O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid:<sup>20</sup> thou hast loosed my bonds.**

Now the Psalmist has concluded his story. Out of faith, confronted with deceitful adversaries, he cried to the Lord. The Lord delivered him, stimulating his love and leading him to declare the Lord's saving character before all the people.

**19b Praise ye the LORD.**--Again, the only possible conclusion to such great salvation is to praise the Lord.

Once again, the Psalm fits our Lord's experience. He suffered from lying enemies, preeminently the deception of Judas, and cried out to God from the cross. Vv. 1-2 bring us to Easter morning.

God has brought him from the sorrows of death back to the land of the living, and his purpose now is to lead us all in praise to God. Vv. 14 and 18 lead to Psalm 117, in which the Psalmist (the speaker in 116) summons all nations, all peoples, to praise God. So our Lord now leads our worship, the theme of the only other place in the Bible that uses "Hallelu-Yah," Revelation 19.<sup>21</sup>

18 As Allen does, but not most others, who take "cup of salvation" as something that the Psalmist drinks as a gift from God.

19 Fokkelman and Rendsburg, *Vetus testamentum*, 53 no 3 2003, p 328-336.

20 Ex 21:4, permanently attached to the household. See notes.

21 The similar expression in Jer 20:13 adds אֵת (as in 117:1). The similar English expression in Isa 12:4 and Jer 33:11 is הָדוּ אֶת-יְהוָה (or לִיהוָה), better rendered "give thanks to the Lord" or "make confession to the Lord."

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### Hallelu-Yah in the Revelation

Note the burst of instances of this expression in 19:1-6.

**Rev 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. 3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. 4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.**--After the fall of Babylon in ch 18, three times we hear, “Alleluia.” We know that this means “Praise the Lord.” The next verse gives the translation, using the same Greek word αὐνεῶ (Strong 134) that translates ללה most commonly in the LXX:<sup>22</sup>

**5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.**--Note the echoes of the Hallelu-Yah Psalms. “All ye his servants” recalls 117:1 “all ye nations ... all ye peoples,” and “ye that fear him, both small and great” is directly from 115:13 “He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.”

But who is speaking here? It is someone who is sitting on the throne, so we expect it to be God. Yet the speaker says, “Praise our God,” indicating that he is distinct from God. The answer comes in the letter to Laodicea,

Rev 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

In “highly exalting” his son to his own right hand (Philippians 2, recall Psalm 110), the Father has brought the son to his own throne. Now the Son speaks from the throne, summoning his people to join him in praise. He is fulfilling his promise from Ps 116:12-19, paying his vows to the Lord in the presence of his people, and it is his voice we hear in Psalm 117.

In response to this invitation, we hear the final Hallelu-Yah of the Scriptures,

**6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.**

<sup>22</sup> Though not in the Hallelu-Yah phrases, which LXX transliterates (as in Revelation 19).

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### Notes

#### Parallels between 111 and 112

111	112
<p>1 <b>Praise ye the LORD.</b> I will praise ידה the LORD with <i>my</i> whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and <i>in</i> the congregation.</p> <p>2 The works מעשה of the LORD <i>are</i> great גדול, sought out of all them that <b>have pleasure</b> therein.</p> <p>3 His work פעל <i>is</i> honourable and glorious: and <b>his righteousness endureth for ever.</b></p> <p>4 He hath made his wonderful works פעל to be remembered זכר: <b>the LORD is gracious and full of compassion</b> חנון ורחום.</p> <p>5 He hath given meat unto them that <b>fear</b> him: he will ever be mindful יזכר of his covenant.</p> <p>6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works מעשה, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.</p> <p>7 The works מעשה of his hands <i>are</i> verity and judgment; all his commandments <i>are</i> sure.</p> <p>8 They stand fast for ever and ever, <i>and are</i> done in truth and uprightness.</p> <p>9 He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and <b>reverend</b> <i>is</i> his name.</p> <p>10 The <b>fear</b> of the LORD <i>is</i> the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do <i>his</i> commandments: his praise תהילה <b>endureth for ever.</b></p>	<p>1 <b>Praise ye the LORD.</b> Blessed אשרי <i>is</i> the man <i>that</i> <b>feareth</b> the LORD, <i>that</i> <b>delighteth greatly</b> in his commandments.</p> <p>2 His seed shall be mighty גבור upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.</p> <p>3 Wealth and riches <i>shall be</i> in his house: and <b>his righteousness endureth for ever.</b></p> <p>4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: <b>he is gracious, and full of compassion</b> חנון ורחום, and righteous.</p> <p>5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.</p> <p>6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance זכר.</p> <p>7 He shall not be <b>afraid</b> of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.</p> <p>8 His heart <i>is</i> established, he shall not be <b>afraid</b>, until he see <i>his desire</i> upon his enemies.</p> <p>9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; <b>his righteousness endureth for ever</b>; his horn shall be exalted with honour.</p> <p>10 The wicked shall see <i>it</i>, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.</p>

#### **Single Preposition Governing Two Nouns (111:1)**

There are many instances:

Psa 31:18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously (בגאווה ובוז) against the righteous.

Psa 32:9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle במתג ורסן, lest they come near unto thee.

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Psa 45:15 With gladness and rejoicing **בשמחות וגיל** shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

Psa 74:6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers **בכשיל וכלפות**.

Psa 98:6 With trumpets and sound of cornet **שופר וקול בהצרות** make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

Psa 105:37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold **בכסף וזהב**: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.

Psa 149:3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp **בתוף וכנור**.

Psa 150:3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp **בנבל וכנור**.

Psa 150:4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance **בתוף ומחול**: praise him with stringed instruments and organs **במנים ועוגב**.

In some of these examples the two must be distinct, and in all they can be. But Hengstenberg:

The public assembly of the righteous (comp. at Ps. cvii. 42) is at the same time a confidence, a confidential meeting (comp. at Ps. lxiv. 2, lxxxiii. 4), because the world is shut out from it, the congregation of the Lord is a community by itself. Thus Luther: "I thank the Lord here in this public assembly, where we are in a peculiar manner by ourselves, as it were in secret council, and no heathen or stranger must be beside us."

### 112:4

Two related questions:

1. What is the subject of **זרה**? Some make it either the righteous man (the subject of the immediately preceding vv), or the Lord, in which case **אור** would be direct object. But **זרה** is never used transitively in the Qal, so it's best to see **אור** as the subject (as in AV).
2. To whom does the last clause refer? It is often referred to "the upright," but it is singular and "upright" is plural, so (with Calvin and Delitzsch) we should understand this of God. "Light," the subject, is a metaphor for God, who is characterized in this way in his dealings with all upright people

### C שפל, 113:6

The Hiphil of this root appears 19x, mostly transitive, as God humbles somebody. (The first instance is 1 Sam 2:7.) But in addition to this verse, there are two other places where it has a clear reflexive sense:

Isa 57:9 And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst **debase thyself** [or, send down, sc. thy messengers] even unto hell.

Jer 13:18 Say unto the king and to the queen, **Humble yourselves**, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.

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### **113:5, Who is Like unto the Lord?**

Psa 113:5 Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, 6 Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!

Other places that discuss the incomparability of our Lord:

Topic	Question	Statement
Majesty, holiness, wonders, esp. over his enemies	Ex 15:11; Dt 3:24; Ps 71:19; 89:6, 8; Isa 40:18, 25; 46:5; Jer 49:19; 50:44	Ex 9:14; Dt 33:26; Ps 86:8-10; Jer 10:6, 7, 16
Teaching	Job 36:22	
Delivering the poor	Ps 35:10	1 Sa 2:22
Predicting the Future	Isa 44:7	Ex 8:9
Keeping covenant		2 Sa 7:22; 1 Ki 8:23

### **Questions:**

Exo 15:11 **Who is like unto thee**, O LORD, among the gods? **who is like thee**, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Job 36:22 Behold, God exalteth by his power: **who teacheth like him**? מי כמוהו מורה?

Psa 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?

Psa 71:19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, **who is like unto thee!**

Psa 89:6 For **who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?** 7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. 8 O LORD God of hosts, **who is a strong LORD like unto thee?** or to thy faithfulness round about thee? 9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. 10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

Isa 44:7 And **who, as I**, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

Jer 49:19 = 50:44 for **who is like me?** and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?

Isa 40:18 cf. v. 25; 46:5 **To whom then will ye liken God?** or what likeness will ye compare unto him? (re. idols)

Deu 3:24 O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for **what God** is there in heaven or in earth, that can do **according to thy works**, and according to thy might?

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### Statements:

Exo 8:9 And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? 10 And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that **there is none like unto the LORD our God**.

Exo 9:14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that **there is none like me** in all the earth.

Deu 33:26 **There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun**, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. 27 The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.

1Sa 2:2 **There is none holy as the LORD**: for **there is none beside thee**: **neither is there any rock like our God**.

2Sa 7:22 Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for **there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee**, according to all that we have heard with our ears. ~ 1 Chr 17:20

1Ki 8:23 And he said, LORD God of Israel, **there is no God like thee**, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: ~ 2 Chr 6:14

Psa 86:8-10 Among the gods **there is none like unto thee**, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works. 9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. 10 For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.

Jer 10:6 Forasmuch as there is **none like unto thee**, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. 7 Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, **there is none like unto thee**. ... 16 The portion of Jacob is **not like them**: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name. (re. idols)

### **The Simple פתי in 116:6**

	פתי	גבל	כסיל	אוויל	תם, תמים	עולל	נער
αφρων	7	10	57	12			
ακακος	5				5		
νηπιος	4					16	3
παιδαριον							134

Immature, naive, but certainly not culpably ignorant like the כסיל

In Prov, which words come together?

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	ערום	חכם	בין	Total
פתי	4	1	4	15
כסיל	3	12	6	49
Total	8	61	38	

Given the vast preponderance of חכם and כסיל over פתי and ערום, it's clear that

- a. the dominant pairings are פתי-ערום and כסיל-חכם
- b. the first pair are the more general words, while the latter two are specialized

116:6 describes the deliverance that the Lord brought. It is an example of how the Lord protects those (plural) who are “simple” פתי (Strong 6612). This word appears 19 times in the Bible, and fifteen of them are in Proverbs. The word is intermediate between the fool and the wise (see notes). The fool is culpable in his ignorance of God's ways, while the wise person obeys the Lord and prospers. The simple is not culpable, but unlearned and naive, and the LXX often translates the term with *νηπιος* “child,” the term that Paul uses for the carnal Christian in 1 Cor 3:1, “babe in Christ.” The usual contrast of “simple” in Proverbs is not “wise,” but “prudent.” In fact, the terms “fool,” “simple,” and “prudent” may form a cline comparable to Paul's three spiritual categories in 1 Corinthians 2-3, the natural man (“fool”), the carnal man or babe (“simple”), and the mature or spiritual man (“prudent, wise”).

### **116:16 Son of thine Handmaid**

David describes himself this way, in a Psalm that cries out to the Lord as the Psalmist describes here in 116a:

Psa 86:16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save **the son of thine handmaid**.

A handmaid is a female slave, often a concubine to her master. The first reference to such a person is of Ishmael:

Gen 21:9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for **the son of this bondwoman** shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. *cf. v. 13*

Sarah's comment shows one implication of the title: the relatively humble status compared with the son of a full wife. Thus

Jotham has this disparaging tone in mind when he describes Abimelech in this way: the people of Shechem should be faithful to Gideon's free sons, not to a slave son.

Jdg 9:17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian: 18 And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother;)

The same tone appears to be relevant in the law of the Sabbath:

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Exo 23:12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and **the son of thy handmaid**, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

Even the subservient beings in the household—domestic animals, slaves, and foreigners—should enjoy the rest.

Another implication is seen in Exodus 21:

Exo 21:2 If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. 3 If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. . . . 7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a **maidservant**, she shall not go out as the menservants do. 8 If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. 9 And if he have **betrothed her** unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters.

Maidservants, unlike manservants, were permanently attached to the household, typically because they were married into the family as concubines (slave-wives). And their children were also permanently attached, not liable to being released. It was as “handmaidens” that Ruth presented herself to Boaz for marriage, and Abigail to David.

So when the Psalmist claims to be “the son of thine handmaid,” he is claiming a humble but secure position in God’s household. He makes no pretentious claims, but is aware that God will not reject him.

But the question remains: who is the Lord’s handmaid? There appear to be only two instances:

Hannah (all אַמָּה, all translated δούλη): 1Sa 1:11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of **thine handmaid**, and remember me, and not forget **thine handmaid**, but wilt give unto **thine handmaid** a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

Mary: Luk 1:38 And Mary said, Behold the **handmaid δούλη** of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. . . . 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his **handmaiden δούλη**: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

From the choice of the Greek word, it appears that Mary draws her speech from Hannah. Hannah asked for a miraculous birth, and presented herself to the Lord as his handmaid. Now Mary has told that she will be with child of the Lord, and takes the place of a handmaid to the one “who hath betrothed her to himself” (Ex 21:8).

Our Lord is quintessentially “the son of thine handmaid,” taking a humble and submissive position before his Father, yet secure in his position in the Father’s household, into which he now welcomes us.

### Notes on אַמָּה vs. שפּחָה

The alternation between אַמָּה and שפּחָה is legendary as one of the source-determining variants in the Pentateuch. How are the terms actually used in the OT? אַמָּה prefers δούλη, but in this expression, the translation is always υιοσ

	παιδισκη	δούλη	Total
אַמָּה	29	18	(Strong 56)
שפּחָה	40	16	63 (Strong 62)
Total	98	50	



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της παιδισκης, never της δουλης. So Mary's choice of this word takes us back to Hannah, not directly to Ps 86:16 and 116:16.

δουλη appears only 3x in the NT: Lk 1:38, 48; Acts 2:18 (quotation of Joel 2:29 שפחה). But Lk also uses παιδισκη in Lk. 12:45; 22:56; Acts 12:13; 16:16.

LXX Ps uses παιδισκη 3x (Ps 86:16; 116:16, both of אמה; and 122:2 of שפחה), and never uses δουλη.

TWOT collects figurative uses of אמה by women:

A wife or prospective wife often referred to herself or was referred to in this way in respect to her man, e.g. Ruth to Boaz (Ruth 3:9); Abigail to David (I Sam 25:14); Bathsheba to David (I Kgs 1:17). *Abigail ref should be vv. 24, 25, 28, 31, 41*

Sometimes a woman so referred to herself in conversation, as Hannah to Eli (I Sam 1:16–cf. II Sam 6:22; 14:15; I Kgs 3:20).

Finally, in the highest sense, devout women addressed the Lord, calling themselves God's servants in a fashion much as Paul did in the NT: so Hannah (I Sam 1:11). This same attitude is seen in the Psalmist who referred to his mother as God's maidservant when addressing the Lord (Ps 86:16; 116:16; ...

But שפחה can also be used in this context:

- Hannah shifts from אמה in 1 Sam 1:16 to שפחה in v. 18 without apparent distinction,
- also Ruth, from 2:13 שפחה to 3:9
- as does Abigail (1Sa 25:41 Behold, let thine handmaid אמה be a servant שפחה to wash the feet of the servants of my lord)
- and the wise woman whom Joab hired to persuade David to restore Absalom (2Sa 14:15 and thy handmaid שפחה said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid אמה).

Austel in TWOT suggests that שפחה may mark for the integration of the person into the family (cf. Ugaritic usage and משפחה), which fits the transition envisioned by Abigail (from slave woman to household member). In any case, unless we want to entertain a source-critical position on Ruth and Samuel, the use of these terms for this purpose in the Pentateuch seems shakey.

In Joel 2, the Lord speaks of “the servants and handmaids,” but Peter in Acts 2:18 makes them the Lord's.