

## Psalms 146-150, Closing Hallelujahs

### Revisiting the Structure of Book 5

Following Robertson, we have been exploring the structure shown in Table 1 (chart), which puts 118 and 119, emphasizing the Messiah and the Law, at the center. This structure accounts for numerous parallels: the theme of return in 107 and 120-134, the Psalms of David, the acrostics at 111, 112, and 145 (as well as the emphasis on the works of the Lord), and the Hallelujah blocks. But it leaves some details unexplained:

- 135, the hymn for the priests to sing in the temple, is also a Hallelujah Psalm, yet is left unrelated to the other Hallelujah Psalms.
- The analysis takes no account of the repeated formula, “O give thanks to [make confession concerning] the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever,” which appears at the start of 107, 118, and 136, and in part throughout each of these.
- It doesn’t take account of the use of acrostic in 118 as well as 111-112 and 145.

With three instances of the introductory formula, three sets of Hallelujah Psalms, and three acrostic blocks, perhaps we should explore an alternative structure. Table 2 (chart) shows one result.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, this analysis also aligns with the end of Book 4. Book 5 thus grows out of the end of Book 4, elaborating themes from the mature faith of the people of God in exile.

- Each of the three blocks begins with the call to confess the Lord. The motto not only appears at the start of each Psalm (as in 105 and 106), but also concludes 118 and permeates 107 and 136 as a refrain.
- Next, each block describes a return of a formerly persecuted people to the land and city that God has prepared. 118 is a fitting central element in this tryptich, because it pictures the victorious Messiah asking and receiving access to the temple.
- The next section shared by all three panels is Psalms with named authors, David and (in one case) Solomon. Only five of the Psalms of the Steps name their author, and (like the opening Psalms) they do deal with going up to the temple to worship, but their central focus, in Psalm 127, is on the house of David. Importantly, in Book 5, Psalms by David appear only in these three groups.
- All three panels use acrostics. In the first and last, the acrostics follow the Psalms of David and

107, Suffering, coming to the land: ידה, חסד	120-134, Ascents: Coming to the Temple
	135-136 ברך, ידה, חסד, hymns for the temple
	137, Call for Judgment
108-110, Psalms of David	138-145, Psalms of David
111-112, Acrostic (111 Works of the Lord)	145, Acrostic (Works of the Lord)
111-117, Hallelu-Yah	146-150, Hallelu-Yah
118-119, Torah (Acrostic) and Messiah Pair	

Table 1: Previous Analysis of Book 5

<sup>1</sup> Allen suggests the basic insight that the “give thanks” formula and the Hallelujahs mark off three sections.

Psalms 146-150

	Book 4	Book 5		
O give thanks ...	105:1, 106:1	107:1 and refrain	118:1-4, 29	136:1 and refrain
Deliverance from Enemies, Coming to Jerusalem/Temple	105-106, from Egypt	107, from afar to the land and city	118, Messiah comes to the temple after suffering	136, from Egypt 137, judgment on oppressors
Acrostic: God's word			119 God's revelation	
Psalms with Authors (David, Solomon)--the covenant	101-103	108-110 Facing adversaries, promise of victory	120-134 (some) Relation to Jerusalem and the Temple	138-145 Struggle with enemies, confidence and praise
Acrostic: God's works	104 (not acrostic)	111, God's works & word 112, blessings of godliness		145 Praise to God—his works
Hallelujah	104-106	111-117	135	146-150

Table 2: Proposed Analysis of Book 5

focus on the *Works* of the Lord. In the central panel, the acrostic (Psalm 119) precedes the Psalms of David, and focuses on the Lord's *Word*. By placing the acrostic here, the editor has brought it together with Psalm 118 to give us the Messiah-Torah pairing that was also emphasized in our previous analysis. The significance of the reference to the Lord's works in the first and third acrostic is seen in the overall distribution of this word, which peaks only here and in 104 (Figure 1, chart).

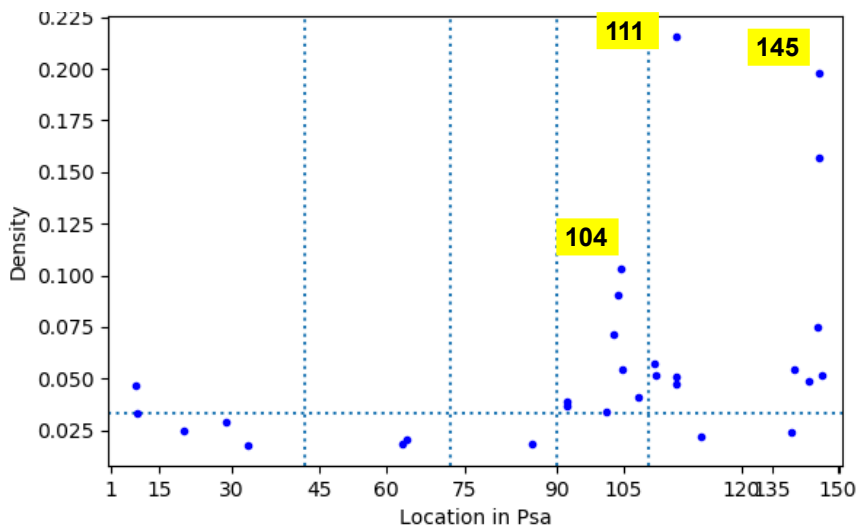


Figure 1: Distribution of מְעִשָּׂה (Strong 4639) in Psalms

- Finally, each panel ends with one or more Hallelujah Psalms. This injunction appears only in the Psalms in Table 2, and in Revelation 19. Of the three words for “Praise” that we have studied (Figure 2, chart), this is the most general.<sup>2</sup>

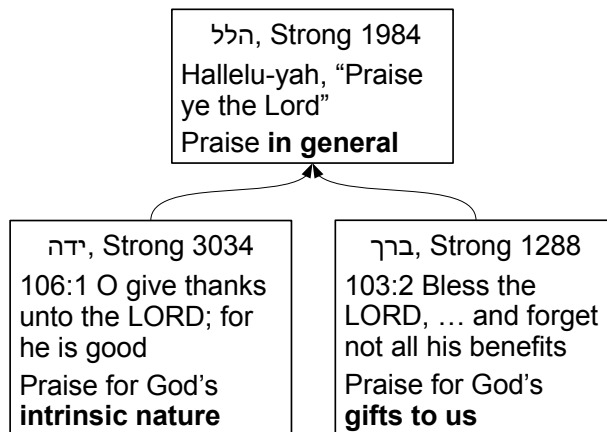
This organization suggests that the editor exhorts us to praise (opening formula and concluding

2 Each of 146-150 both begins and ends with “Hallelujah.” In 104, 105, and 106, the expression ends its Psalm. In 111, 112, 115, and 115 it begins it. It occurs at both ends in 113, 117, and 135.

## Psalms 146-150

Hallelujahs), because the Lord has delivered us from our enemies and gathered us to himself (107, 118, 136-137) and brought us under his Messianic king (the Davidic emphasis in 108-110, 120-134, 138-145), all subject to his word (central acrostic in 119) and his works (outer acrostics, 111-112, 145).

It's not unusual in Bible study to have to revise one's view of the structure. We did it in Book 1. Preliminary correspondences may suggest one structure, but as we notice other details (in this case, the injunction to "confess the Lord") and find things that aren't consistently handled (such as the attributions to David or the Hallelujah Psalms), we may revise our view. This experience is a reminder that anything we say *about* the Bible is subject to revision; only the Word of the Lord itself endures forever.



*Figure 2: Hebrew Words for "Praise, Thank"*

## Overview of Psalms 146-150

Table 3 (chart) compares the final five Hallelujah Psalms. They start off (146-147) as conventional: people are doing the praising, with nature passively demonstrating the Lord's creative power and the wicked subdued by God. But then things change unexpectedly. The progression shows an increasing chorus joining in the praise of God (Figure 3).

- 146 starts with a single worshipper: "While I live will I praise the Lord."
- In 147, the community joins in to praise "our God" and "our Lord." In 146 and 147, nature is passive, showing God's power as creator.
- In 148, nature actively joins with people and angels in praising the Lord.

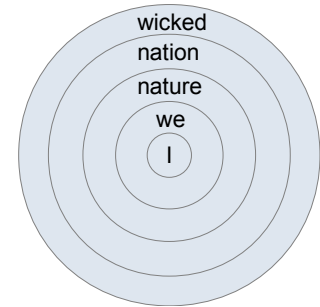
Psalm	Distinctive	Nature	Fate of Wicked	Kingship
146	"I" (1p singular)	Passive: created (6)	9 turned upside down	3 Put not your trust in princes 10 the Lord shall reign for ever
147	"We" (1p plural)	Passive: 4-5 counted; 8-9 provided for; 14 prospered; 16-18 ruled	6 cast to the ground 10 ignored 20 not blessed	2-3 builds Zion, restores captives 13-15, sustains society
148	"Inanimate" nature praises	Active in praise	14 dominated	11 kings & princes subject to him
149	Saints judge wicked	(none)	7 avenged by saints	2 be joyful in their king
150	Call, no Cause	(none)	6 praise the LORD	(none)

*Table 3: Comparison of the Hallelujah Psalms*

## Psalms 146-150

- In 149, the saints form a nation that subdues the wicked.
- The first four Psalms distinguish God’s blessing on the righteous from his judgment on the wicked. In 150, the vocabulary suggests that even the wicked join in the praise of God.

The last Psalm, unlike the first four, offers no cause for praise, but is a pure call for everything and everyone to praise the Lord.



*Figure 3: An Expanding Chorus*

### Psalm 146, A Personal Hymn Choosing the Lord over Nobles

This Psalm offers a personal (“I”) hymn to the Lord, contrasting the blessings of his rule with the futility of trusting in human nobles (Figure 4, chart).<sup>3</sup>

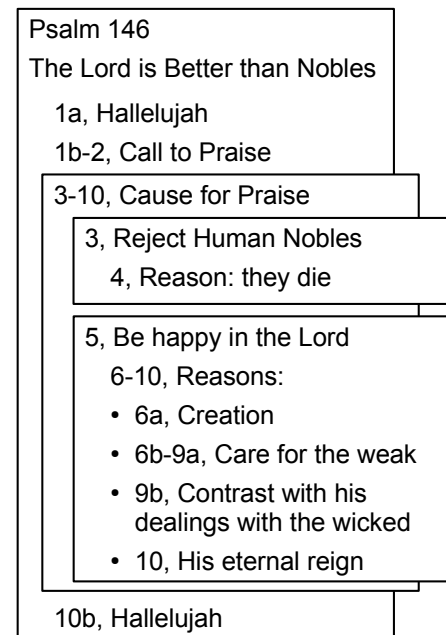
#### 146:1 Praise ye the LORD.

**Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.**--The first Call to Praise in 146-150 focuses on the Psalmist himself. The scope of praise will expand as we move through the five Psalms. But it begins with a deep personal commitment. We can lead others spiritually only as far as we have gone ourselves.

The Cause for Praise is a contrast between human nobles, and the Lord. In each paragraph, he begins with a statement, involving both our mental attitude (trust, hope) and the help we need, that he goes on to justify.

**3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.**--The first part of the contrast focuses on human princes. The word (גִּידִיב, Strong 5081) emphasizes not governmental function (that would be שָׂר, Strong 8269), but wealth and prestige—perhaps “nobles.” Subjectively, do not trust in them. Objectively, they can provide no help.

**4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.**--The reason is that a mere man is mortal. His support will not endure.



*Figure 4: Structure of Psalm 146*

3 The components of vv. 6-10 are distinguished by their grammatical structure.

- 6a has two participial VO clauses.
- 6b-7a has two more, but the first is set off by the direct object
- 7b-9a has five more, each with יהוה as explicit subject, in SVO order
- 9b turns to finite verbs, but in OV order, contrasting his care for the weak with judgment on the wicked
- 10a is VSO

**5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:**--Instead, we should place our subjective focus (“hope”) on the Lord, who can provide the objective help we need. The rest of the Psalm outlines the reasons for our confidence in him.

**6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is:**--First we are reminded of his creative work.

**which keepeth truth for ever: 7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry.**--Next is his faithfulness to covenant in caring for the oppressed.

**The LORD looseth the prisoners: 8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: 9 The LORD preserveth the strangers;**--He elaborates this theme, naming the Lord each time.

**he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.**--A final contrast introduces the wicked, whom we will trace throughout these five Psalms. What becomes of them?

**10 The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.**--Human nobles are unreliable because they die, but our God reigns forever, and so we can trust in him.

**Praise ye the LORD.**

## Psalm 147, The Community Praises the King and the Creator

This Psalm is an alternation with three parallel stanzas (Table 4, chart).<sup>4</sup> All three celebrate God’s creative power and recognize the distinction he makes between his people and the wicked. The first and last also describe his work as king.

Call to Praise	1	7	12
Cause for Praise:			
• The King in his Capital	2-3 Builds Zion & gathers captives	(lacking)	13-15 Sustains the society
• The Creator in his World	4-5 Counts & names stars	8-9 Provides for animals	16-18 Rules the weather
• Two kinds of Subjects	6 Meek vs. Wicked	10-11 Physical strength vs. fear & faith	19-20 Those with his word vs. those without

Table 4: Structure of Psalm 147

**147:1 Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.**--In 146, a single person praises the Lord. Now a group, calling him “our God,” is speaking. The circle of praise is widening.

4 The basic pattern is from Schwartz, *JSOT* 42.3 (2018): 317-339, who attributes it to Strikovsky, *Beit Mikra* 13 (1968), pp. 43-48.

**2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth<sup>5</sup> together the outcasts of Israel. 3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.**--The one introduced as King in Psalm 146 establishes his capital and cares for his subjects.

**4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by *their* names. 5 Great is **our** Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.**--Adam showed his authority over the animals by naming them (Gen 2:19), but Abram could not even number the stars (Gen 15:5); the Lord shows his greater wisdom and authority by naming each one.

**6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.**--The first stanza closes contrasting the Lord's care for the righteous, and his judgment of the wicked.

**7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto **our** God:**--In the second stanza, the community continues to acknowledge the Lord.

**8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. 9 He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.**--This stanza does not mention Jerusalem or the Lord's role as king, but moves directly to his power as creator.

**10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. 11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy** **דסד.**--The contrast here is between those who trust in their own strength, and those who fear God and trust in his loyal love.

**12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.**--The third stanza brings Jerusalem back into focus.

**13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. 14 He maketh peace *in* thy borders, and fillet thee with the finest of the wheat.**--As in v. 2, the cause for praise begins with the Lord's care for his society, the role of a king.

**15 He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth: his word runneth very swiftly. 16 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. 17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? 18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.**--His power as creator is seen in his sovereignty over the weather.

**19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: and *as for his* judgments, they have not known them.**--Now the contrast is between his chosen people, whom he has favored with his revelation, and other nations, who do not enjoy this blessing.

**Praise ye the LORD.**

5 Five times (vv. 2, 4, 14, 15, 16) the pattern of participial descriptions of God is broken with an imperfect. Allen quotes Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1960 187-88 as seeing the second (imperfect) verb in each case as expressing consequence.

## Psalm 148, All Creation Joins the Praise

The third Hallelujah Psalm broadens the circle of those who praise the Lord yet again. From a single believer (146) and the community of the faithful (147), the chorus increases in two directions. First, it now includes heaven, so that angels join people in praise, reminding us of the angelic choir at the Lord’s advent, to which the shepherds added their voices,

Luk 2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host **praising God**, and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. ... 20 And the shepherds returned, **glorifying and praising God** for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Second, inanimate creation joins in the praise. Up to this point, nature has been passive, the object of God’s creative power, but now it is active, part of the chorus. Recall (chart)

Luk 19:37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; ... 39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, **the stones would immediately cry out.**

The structure of the Psalm (Figure 5, chart) moves from the heavens (1b-6) to earth (7-14a), as in the appearance of the angels to the shepherds. Note the alternation in call to praise (bracketed by “Praise the Lord” and “Let them praise”) and cause for praise in both stanzas, and the chiasm in the agents of praise between the two calls to praise.

### 148:1 Praise ye the LORD.

**Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. 2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts<sup>6</sup>.**--He begins by invoking the angelic host. We know of their role in praising God from 103:21, Isaiah 6, and Luke 2, among other passages.

**3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.**--But now he brings in inanimate objects, which we do not usually associate with praise. Yet their systematic behavior in obedience to his command in Genesis 1 may be seen as praise of the Lord.

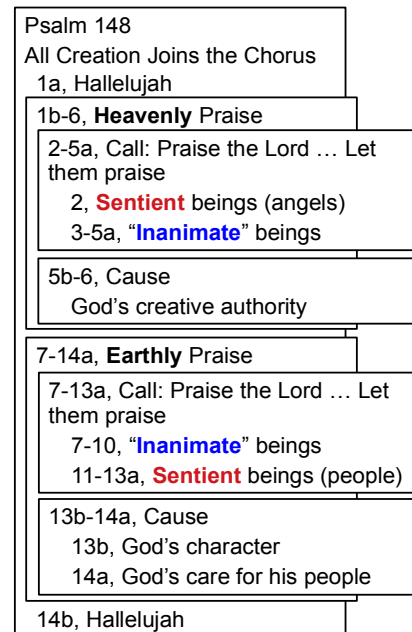


Figure 5: Structure of Psalm 148

<sup>6</sup> *Kethib* is singular, and fits better with usage elsewhere. The plural *Qere* probably follows 103:21, where however the clause is intermediary between angels and all the world, and probably refers to the tribes of Israel. If the plural is correct here, it may reflect the two hosts, angels (v. 2) and heavenly bodies (v. 3).

**5 Let them praise ללה the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. 6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.**--The cause for praise in this case is God's work of creation.

**7 Praise the LORD from the earth,**--Now he turns his attention to the earth. The praise of nonhuman nature here echoes the promises of the royal Psalms at the coming of the king, the same event in focus in the passages in Luke.

Psa 96:11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice 13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

Psa 98:7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8 Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together 9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

**ye dragons, and all deeps:**--"Dragons" (תנין Strong 8577) probably refers to whales as in Gen 1:21. He goes from the highest heaven to the denizens of the deep.

**8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word:**--The weather, as uncontrollable as it is to us, renders obedience to him.

**9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:**--Compare 96:11; 98:9. Even the mountains sing praise to the Lord.

**10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:**--The "dumb animals" join in.

**11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: 12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:**--Finally, we come to those on earth whom we expect to praise the Lord, people of all ranks.

**13 Let them praise the name of the LORD:**--The cause for praise has two components.

**for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.**--First, they praise him for who he is, his intrinsic nature.

**14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.**--Next, as in vv. 5-6, they praise him for what he has done, in this case, establishing Israel as a nation. This action is foundational to the following Psalm.

**Praise ye the LORD.**

## Psalm 149, The Nation Praises the Lord

In 148, passive Nature became active in praising the Lord. In the same way, we have seen the



## Psalms 146-150

nation as the mostly<sup>7</sup> passive recipient of the Lord’s rule up to this point (146:10; 147:2, 13, 14; 148:14), but now Israel as Israel, as the civic body, joins in the praise. There are two calls to praise (2-3, 5-6), the first accompanied with a reason, the second with the purpose for their actions (Figure 6, chart). Both calls to praise name instruments—in the first, timbrel and harp; in the second, a two-edged sword (!).

### **149:1 Praise ye the LORD.**

**Sing unto the LORD a new song,**--The exhortation comes from the openings of Psalms 96 and 98, which already informed the praise of nature in Psalm 148. Those Psalms are prominent members of the royal Psalms, that anticipate the Lord’s coming rule over all the earth. They are an appropriate way to introduce this Psalm, which also focuses on God’s earthly rule.

This is the last reference in Psalms to “a new song” (33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9). As noted in Psalm 33, the expression probably refers to a “renewed song,” praise that has always been appropriate but becomes particularly relevant when the King takes his throne.

**and his praise in the congregation of saints. 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.**--Note the national titles. It is not just the congregation that praises him, but Israel and Zion, established by God in 148:14.

**3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.**--Thus did the women of Israel celebrate the Lord’s victories, whether Miriam at the Red Sea (Ex 15:20), or Jephthah’s daughter recognizing his victory over the Ammonites (Jdg 11:34), or David after the slaughter of Goliath (1 Sam 18:6). Thus did David welcome the Ark into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:4-17). As in Psalms 96 and 98, and promised in Revelation 19, the king has come to establish his kingdom.

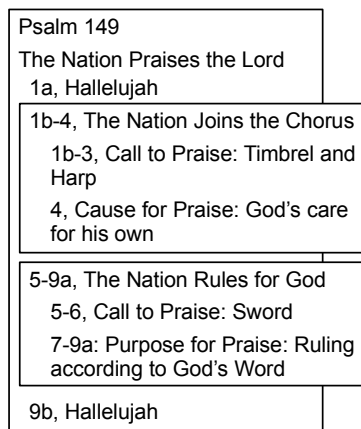
**4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.**--The first call for praise is supported by a cause for praise, God’s blessings to his people.

**5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;**--The next call to praise has a surprising twist. We expect the chorus to carry lyres and timbrels, not weapons of war. Yet when the Lord establishes his rule on earth, he will enforce his law as a righteous king.

**7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the peoples; 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; 9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints.**--In the coming kingdom, we will share in his rule:

Rev 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also

<sup>7</sup> 147:12 is the one exception, but the focus is on the city, not the people. It anticipates the role of creation in 148.



*Figure 6: Structure of Psalm 149*

## Psalms 146-150

overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

All human government derives its authority from God, and he expects it to punish the wicked as well as protect the righteous. When the Messianic king comes, he will rule with a rod of iron, and his saints, ruling with him, will honor him by enforcing his law.

**Praise ye the LORD.**

### Psalm 150, Every Knee Shall Bow

The last Hallelujah Psalm is distinctive in two ways.

First, it is all a Call to Praise. Every clause is an imperative to praise the Lord. In order, they answer the WH- questions: where, why, how, and by whom should praise be offered?<sup>8</sup>

Second, it appears not to mention the wicked, who are judged in the other four Hallelujah Psalms. God turns their way upside down (146:9), casts them to the ground (147:6), exalts Israel's horn, implying the defeat of her enemies (148:14), and executes vengeance and judgments on them through his saints (149:7). We will return to this puzzle in v. 6.

**150:1 Praise ye the LORD.**

#### ***1b, Where shall we praise the Lord?***

**Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.**--Corresponding to the pairing of heavenly and earthly praise in 148, here we see the two locations: the earthly temple, and the heavenly throne room. This pairing is fully developed in Hebrews:

Heb 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty **in the heavens**; 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of **the true tabernacle**, which the Lord pitched, and not man. ... 4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 5 Who serve unto the **example and shadow** of **heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

Heb 9:1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and **a worldly**

Psalm 150
Every Knee shall Bow
1a, Hallelujah
1b, Where? Sanctuary (earthly and heavenly)
2, Why? God's Acts and Character
3-5, How? Instruments
6a, Who? Even the wicked (!)
6b Hallelujah

*Figure 7: Structure of Psalm 150*

<sup>8</sup> Outline suggested by Allen, attributed by him to Taylor in the Interpreter's Bible on Psalms, p. 760.

**sanctuary.** 2 For there was **a tabernacle** made; ... 11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by **a greater and more perfect tabernacle**, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; ... 23 It was therefore necessary that **the patterns** of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but **the heavenly things themselves** with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ is not entered into the **holy places made with hands**, which are the figures of the true; but into **heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

There will be an earthly temple during the Millennium, answering to the heavenly sanctuary, and we should expect praise to rise to the Lord both from there and within the heavenly sanctuary.

## ***2, Why praise the Lord?***

This information would ordinarily be included in a separate “cause for praise” section, but here it is incorporated into the command to praise God. Note the two aspects that deserve praise, corresponding to the two verbs “bless” and “confess.”

**2 Praise him for his mighty acts:**--What he has done; typically the object of blessing בָּרַךְ the Lord (in our idiom, “thanks”)

**praise him according to his excellent greatness.**--His character; the object of making confession to the Lord (יָדָה, misleadingly translated “thank” in AV).

## ***3-5, How to praise the Lord?***

**3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.**--All the instruments of music are brought together to praise the Lord.

## ***6a, Who praises the Lord?***

This Psalm at first glance appears to be unique among the Hallelujah Psalms in not mentioning God’s judgment on his enemies. This final verse may provide the answer to that puzzle.

**6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD.**--See note for discussion of the term, כָּל נִשְׁמָה (ה). This apparently innocuous term regularly describes those doomed to death, particularly the Canaanites devoted to the ban when Israel first conquered the land: (chart)

Deut. 20:16 But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive **nothing that breatheth**:

Jos. 10:40 So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed **all that breathed**, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.

## Psalms 146-150

Jos. 11:14 And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they **any to breathe**.

A related expression describes the destruction of the flood (Gen 7:21).

This verse may be the missing reference to the wicked in the final Psalm. Even they will one day join in the praise to God. The NT may echo this in acknowledging that those “under the earth,” where the wicked spirits are bound (2 Pet 2:4; Rev 13:11; 20:3), will praise the Lord.

Phi 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and **things under the earth**; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Rev 5:13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and **under the earth**, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

**Praise ye the LORD.**

## Hallelu-Yah in the Revelation

Other than Psalms 104-106, 111-117, 135, and 146-150, Hallelujah appears elsewhere only in Revelation 19.

**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**. **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.--When we studied the first Hallelujah section in Book 5 (111-117), we noted that the term does not occur again until the end of the Revelation. In particular, in v. 5 the leader of this praise is someone who sits on the throne, yet speaks of “our God.” This is the highly exalted Son of God, our Lord Jesus (Rev 3:21; Philippians 2, recall Psalm 110). He is the one who summons us to “praise the Lord,” 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.

## Notes

### ***Implicit Judgment in Psalm 148***

146, 147, and 149 all mention the casting down of the wicked, but at first glance Psalm 148 is silent on this topic. Perhaps the reference in v. 14 to lifting up the horn קרן רום implies the humbling of the adversaries, as in several other passages:

1Sa 2:10 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.

Psa 75:10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the **horns** of the righteous shall be **exalted**.

Psa 89:23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24 But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his **horn be exalted**.

Psa 92:9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10 But my **horn** shalt thou **exalt** like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. 11 Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me.

Psa 112:9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his **horn** shall be **exalted** with honour. 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.

In fact, this is a universal tendency in poetry; the only context where the contrast is not clear is a prose one,

1Ch 25:5 All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to **lift up the horn**. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.

### ***Semantic Scope of 150:6 כל (ה)נשמה***

The simple כל נשמה or כל הנשמה appears to be restricted to human life:

Deut. 20:16 But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive **nothing that breatheth**:

Jos. 10:40 So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed **all that breathed**, as the LORD God of Israel commanded. [includes Ai, where the animals were spared]

## Psalms 146-150

Jos. 11:11 And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not **any** left **to breathe**: and he burnt Hazor with fire.

Jos. 11:14 And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they **any** to **breathe**.

1 Ki. 15:29 And it came to pass, when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam **any that breathed**, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite:

Ps. 150:6 Let **every thing that hath breath** praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

Many of these statements are with respect to the חרם, “utter destruction,” the ritual fate decreed for the Canaanite cities. This could, but did not necessarily, involve the animals. The general instruction focused on the risk posed by the people:

Deu 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; 2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and **utterly destroy** them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: 3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

Deu 20:16 But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: 17 But thou shalt **utterly destroy** them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: 18 That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

In Jericho, Joshua did destroy the animals:

Jos 6:21 And they **utterly destroyed** all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

Likewise, the ban on an apostate Israelite city includes the animals, but they are named explicitly:

Deu 13:15 Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.

But not for the transjordanian cities of Sihon and Og:

Deu 2:34 And we took all his [Sihon's] cities at that time, and **utterly destroyed** the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain: 35 Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took.

## Psalms 146-150

Deu 3:6 And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, **utterly destroying** the men, women, and children, of every city. 7 But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves.

Nor for Ai:

Jos 8:26 For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had **utterly destroyed** all the inhabitants of Ai. 27 Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua. [8:2]

The destruction of Ai is considered comparable to that of Jericho, in spite of the difference with respect to animals:

Jos 10:1 Now it came to pass, when Adonizedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had **utterly destroyed** it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king;

The expression to describe land life, including animals, is more complex:

Gen 7:21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: 22 **All in whose nostrils was the breath of life**, of all that was in the dry land, died.

This expression starts off with כל אשר נשמה, but is more complex, and is clarified with the ability to move.

Notably, when God told Saul to destroy Amalek, he is explicit:

1Sa 15:3 Now go and smite Amalek, and **utterly destroy** all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

But perhaps we're missing the point. Apart from Ps 150:6, this expression appears only in contexts describing violent destruction, and most characteristically as part of the הרם that God commanded Joshua to impose on the Canaanites. Perhaps the point in our Psalm is that ultimately everybody, even those condemned by God for their rebellion, will praise the Lord—very much the same point that Paul makes in Philippians,

Phi 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The expression is probably to be linked to Gen 2:7,

Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life** נשמת הים; and man became a living soul.

Breath is something that God controls, whether to give it in creation or to doom it in judgment.

## Hebrew Words for Praise

See notes on Psalms 101-106, where we had this table:

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

Clearly, *αινεω* and cognates are both dedicated and dominant for  $\sqrt{\text{הלל}}$ . It is interesting that in the gospels, Luke dominates the use of this verb and the cognate *αινος*, including the two passages that illustrate the expansion of praise beyond earth and beyond sentient beings that we noted in Psalm 148.

Matt. 21:16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected **praise**?

Lk. 2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host **praising** God, and saying,

Lk. 2:20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and **praising** God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Lk. 18:43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave **praise** unto God.

Lk. 19:37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and **praise** God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

Lk. 24:53 And were continually in the temple, **praising** and blessing God. Amen. [MT only]