

# Psalms 15-24

## Psalms 15 through 24

### MacroView of Book 1

Book 1 of the Psalms (Figure 1, chart) begins in Psalms 3-14 with a poetic pyramid around Psalm 8, teaching that God’s strength is made perfect in weakness. Psalms 15-24 are another such structure, even more regular in its chiastic structure (Figure 2, chart). Note four features.

1. There are ten Psalms in the group, an even number, but Psalms 20 and 21 are a pair. 20 offers a prayer for the king and 21 describes the Lord’s answer. Psalm 18 shows this same sequence of prayer and answer, encouraging us to see Psalms 20-21 together as corresponding to Psalm 18. Thus we have nine units with Psalm 19 at the center, just as Psalm 8 was at the center or “pinnacle”<sup>1</sup> of Psalms 3-14.

2. In Psalms 3-14, most of the Psalms other than the center were laments. Here, different genres (wisdom, confidence, laments, thanksgiving), are ordered chiastically around the center.<sup>2</sup>

3. The outermost Psalms both urge the reader to obey God’s law, which is the subject of the central Psalm 10.<sup>3</sup> This repeated theme corresponds with the first introductory Psalm, Psalm 1, exhorting the reader to dedication to the law of the Lord.

4. Psalm 24 echoes Psalm 15, but extends it by adding a description of the King of Glory, who meets the requirements of the law and thus can enter the holy gates. This Messianic theme

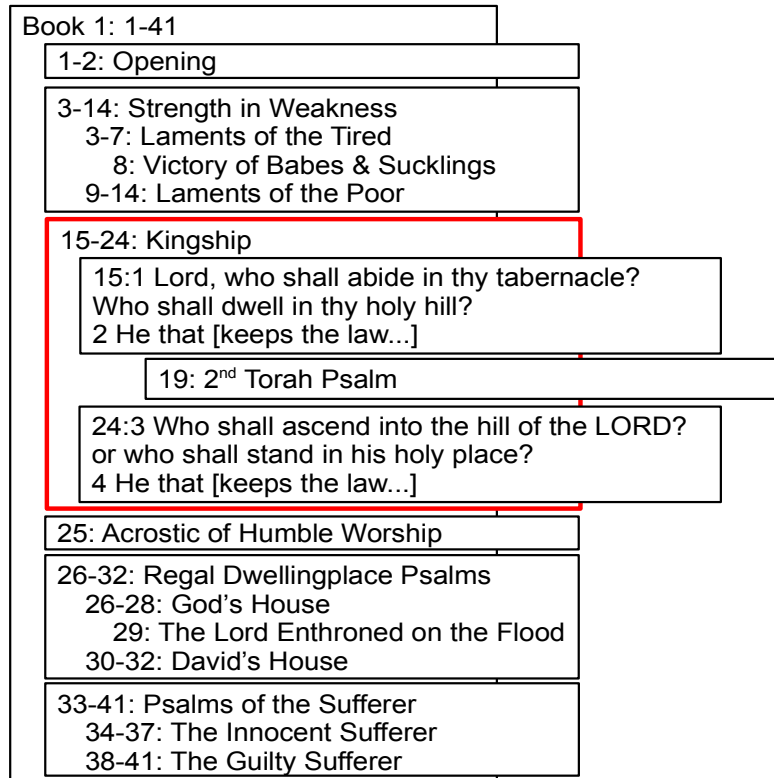


Figure 1: Structure of Book 1 (Pss 1-41)

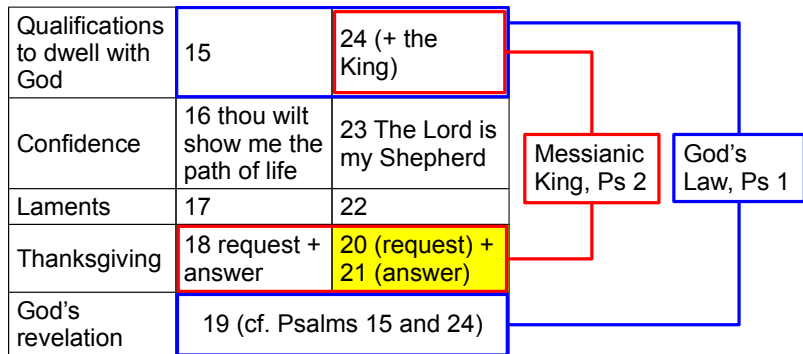


Figure 2: Chiasm in Psalms 15-24

1 Robertson’s term

2 See P. Sumpter, *Biblica* 94:2 (2013) 186-209, following Auffret in *La Sagesse*.

3 This is an instance of Lund’s third law of chiasm (*Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill, 1942; reprinted Peabody, MA, 1992), p. 41, “identical ideas ... at the extremes and the center.”

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corresponds to the second introductory Psalm, Psalm 2, and is also the theme of Psalms 18 and 20. Thus the structure as a whole brings us back to the two themes on which the entire Psalter opens, the law of God and the King who fulfills that law.

### Psalms 15 and 24

Psalm 15 consists of a question, the answer, and an assurance. Psalm 24 includes a very similar question, answer, and assurance (Table 1, chart), but adds an introduction and a conclusion.

These two Psalms were probably composed when David brought the Ark from Kirjath Jearim to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 15).<sup>4</sup> Recall the history (chart). The Philistines captured the ark when the Israelites carried it into battle at Aphek (1 Samuel 4), but in its presence, their idols fell on their faces, and the Lord smote them with plague (1 Samuel 5). So after seven months, they sent the ark back to the borders of Israel, to Beth-Shemesh (1 Samuel 6).

These Israelites curiously looked into the ark, and the Lord smote them. The survivors said:

1Sa 6:20 Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God?

This cry is echoed in both of our Psalms, at 15:1 and 24:3.

The ark went next to Kirjath Jearim, where it remained for as long as 70 years (see Note). David tried to bring it up in 2 Samuel 6, but in an unbiblical manner, leading to the death of Uzzah. David's question at that point recalls the question of the men of Bethshemesh:

2Sa 6:9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

For the next three months he pondered the problem, and finally instructed the Levites to carry the ark in the biblical manner, on poles. His remark at that point was,

1Ch 15:13 the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

Psalm 15 probably grows out of the failure of the first attempt, as David meditates on the importance of coming before God in the right manner. The second attempt succeeded, and David joyfully led the ark into Jerusalem

2Sa 6:17 And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it:

<sup>4</sup> 1 Chronicles 16 records another Psalm that David composed on this occasion. Parts of this Psalm are repeated in Psalms 96, 105, and 106.

	24:1-2 The earth <i>is</i> the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; ...
15:1 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?	3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?
2-5a He that walketh uprightly, ...	4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; ...
5b He that doeth these <i>things</i> shall never be moved.	5-6 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
	7-10 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;... the King of glory shall come in. 8 Who <i>is</i> this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, ...

*Table 1: Comparison of Psalms 15 and 24*

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This success may have inspired Psalm 24, celebrating the Lord's entrance into the city.

### **Psalm 15**

**Psa 15:1 A Psalm מִזְמוֹר of David.**

The body of the Psalm has three parts:

1. A question about who can dwell with the Lord;
2. The answer in three triples of ethical injunctions (2-5a);
3. A statement of the benefit of doing these things (5b).

**LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?**--One function of the Levites was as "keepers" [guards] "of the gates of the tabernacle," 1 Chr 9:19. Access into the sanctuary was restricted to those who met certain qualifications.

Leviticus 1-15 has many rules restricting access to God. These concern ceremonial uncleanness, caused by illness, childbirth, dietary violations, and similar issues.<sup>5</sup> In these Psalms, David recognizes that ethical faults are a deeper cause of separation from God.<sup>6</sup> In addition, he is extending the worshiper's objective—not just to gain access to the sanctuary for a period, but to abide, to dwell, to stand there. He is seeking ongoing fellowship with God. The ritual law of the sanctuary is a type or pattern for a much deeper ethical law governing our fellowship with God.

The injunctions come in sets of three, or nine in all, almost a second decalog. The first set gives positive injunctions:

**2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.**--Note the final qualification, "in his heart." Not just his outward conduct and speech, but his inner thoughts, are pleasing to the Lord.

The next triple gives three negative things that we are to avoid. Continuing the final element of v. 2, and perhaps recalling the laments of Psalms 5 and 12, the emphasis is on verbal sins. The center of the triple gives the general offense that is to be avoided, "doeth evil to his neighbor," while the outer members of the triple describe a specific form of this evil.

**3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue,**--A related form of this verb means literally, "to spy on," and suggests that this activity is reporting "dirt" that we have discovered about somebody.

**nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.**--The end of the triple looks at the person who is on the receiving end of the slander.

We might summarize: "neither start nor repeat a slander against your neighbor." This exhortation is in the spirit of the New Testament. Recall Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13,

1Co 13:5 [charity ...] thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

5 David had experience with these regulations when he fled from Saul to Nob and asked for the week-old shewbread: 1 Sam 21:4.

6 This Psalm probably lies behind the similar exhortation of Isa 33:14-15. Recall also the interchange between the Messianic king and the priests in Psa 118:19, 20.

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Love does not run around looking for dirt on people and trying to pull them down. It does not rejoice in iniquity, but looks for the best in people.<sup>7</sup>

Paul did not invent this ethic. David recognized that such conduct against God's creatures excludes us from fellowship with God.

The final triple consists of pairs of statements that reinforce or explain each other.

### **4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD.--**

This and other verses in the Psalms appear to clash with "love your enemies." Compare:

Psa 31:6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.

Psa 139:21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

But David did love his enemies:

Psa 7:4 yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:

Psa 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother.

He is saying something quite different in v. 4. His point is not whether they are his enemies, but what their relation is to the Lord. Insofar as they have offended him, he treats them with grace, but he cannot sympathize with their animosity toward the Lord.

**He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.--**The second pair of statements deals with truthfulness. We might make a promise, and later find that we keeping it will hurt us. The world's solution is to search for some technicality that makes the promise not binding. (When I was a boy, the myth was that if you crossed your fingers while making a promise, it didn't hold.) But one who would be God's guest must honor his word, as God honors his.

We are permitted, and even encouraged, to seek a mutually agreeable change in such a situation:

Pro 6:1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, *if* thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, 2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. 3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, **humble thyself**, and make sure thy friend.

But in this process, we "humble" ourselves. We do not seek a technical exemption. We stand behind our commitment, while honestly explaining to the other party what has happened, and asking their help. And if they do not help relieve our situation, we can look to the support of God, in whose fellowship we remain, and who (as we learned in Psalms 3-14) protects the weak.

**5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.--**The third pair focuses on forbidden financial gain. Taking reward against the innocent is a particular temptation to kings and judges, who accept a bribe to pervert judgment in favor of the rich. But the exhortation against usury (interest on loans) is more complicated, because the Scriptures

7 We see the same emphasis in Paul's description of the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21). Of the 17 items in this list, the first four deal with physical uncleanness, the next two with false gods, and the last two with wild parties, but the main body, eight items, describe various forms of enmity among people.

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sometimes speak positively of such transactions. Recall the parable of the servants entrusted with the master's money in Matthew 25. To the one who buried his talent in the earth, the master says,

Mat 25:27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own **with usury**.

He could hardly urge this course of action on him if interest were absolutely forbidden. In fact, Moses makes a distinction based on who is receiving the loan:

Deu 23:19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to **thy brother**; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: 20 Unto **a stranger** thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto **thy brother** thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Interest is allowed from a stranger, but not from a brother, especially a poor one.

Lev 25:35 And if thy brother be **waxen poor**, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: *yea, though he be* a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. 36 Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. 37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.<sup>8</sup>

The prohibition of interest is not meant to restrict commercial transactions, but to guard against exploiting needy brethren. If a believer has needs, we should be ready to give to him, and not think of him as a source of revenue.

**He that doeth these things shall never be moved.**--This final promise goes beyond v. 1. One who lives as God desires will not only dwell as his guest, but enjoy his protection in all of life.

### **Psalm 24**

The central section of this Psalm repeats the theme of Psalm 15: fellowship with the Lord depends on moral uprightness. But he adds a preface and an epilog that extend its meaning.

**Psa 24:1 A Psalm מְזֹמֵר of David.**

**The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.**--Psalm 15, and vv. 3-4 of this Psalm, deal with access to the sanctuary, but the Lord's dominion is far broader than just the temple or tabernacle. All of the earth is his, and the requirements for access to his temple are binding on all who live on the earth. Here is a hint of the universal rule of the Messianic king.

Now David repeats the argument of Psalm 15.

**3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?**--Again, he asks who can approach the Lord. Again, he envisions not simply a temporary visit, but abiding (here, standing) there.

In response, he does not repeat the extensive ethical exhortation of Psalm 15, but summarizes it with two positive statements, followed by two negative ones.

**4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;**--Positively, both his conduct and the underlying motive must be pure before God. This verse recalls the importance of both inward and outward obedience with which the injunctions in Psa 15:2.

<sup>8</sup> See also Exod 22:25.

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**who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.**--The negative exhortation recalls the verbal attacks of David's enemies, the focus of Psalms 5 and 12. It also recalls the second triplet, Psa 15:3, forbidding both originating and passing on malicious rumors.

**5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.**--The closing promise corresponds to 15:5c, "He that doeth these things shall never be moved." The first half of the verse is expected. But the second is a surprise. After the requirements of v. 4, and the much longer list in 15:2-5, we think of this person as already possessing righteousness. But David insists, like Paul in Romans 4, that true righteousness is a gift *from* the Lord. The following verse gives us a better understanding of what is involved in the conduct that David has been describing:

**6 This is the generation of them that seek him, [those] that seek thy face,  $\Theta$  are Jacob.**

**Selah.**--The people in view are those who are seeking the Lord. Our strivings after righteousness are not to earn God's favor. Rather, they reflect our hatred of sin, our desire for righteousness, and our seeking after the Lord, who alone can give us true righteousness as his free gift.

The body of the Psalm, like Psalm 15, asks, "Who shall dwell with the Lord?" The epilog adds another question: "Who comes to dwell with men?" After discussing the criteria for us to ascend into God's hill, he shows us one who comes boldly through the gates. The Messianic king is perfect in the righteousness that God requires, and in fact is identified with יהוה himself.

**7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;**--Jerusalem's gates are called "doors of eternity" because of their antiquity. From them Melchizedek came forth to bless Abram, returning from the slaughter of the kings (Gen 14:18), and they stood firm against David, requiring him to use subtlety to gain entrance into the city (2 Samuel 5). Now they are open to receive a visitor, someone who must meet the requirements of vv. 3-6.

**and the King of glory shall come in.**--The one who approaches is described as "the king of glory," or more idiomatically, "the glorious king." This Psalm is the only place in the OT that this title occurs, but the expression "the king is glorious," using the verb instead of the noun, appears in Michal's sarcastic greeting to David when he brought the ark up to Jerusalem (chart):

2Sa 6:20 And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

But his response showed that he was not seeking his glory, but seeking to glorify the Lord:

2Sa 6:21 therefore will I play before the LORD. 22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight:

So in the Psalm, he insists that the glorious king is none other than יהוה, and repeats the question and answer to be sure that we don't miss it:

**8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.**--Vv. 8 and 10 are a direct statement of the mystery of the incarnation: the divine Lord is the promised, glorious human king.

## Psalms 16 and 23

## Psalms 15-24

These two Psalms of confidence correspond to one another, as marked by numerous similarities (Table 2, chart), supporting our chiastic model of Psalms 15-24.

	Psalm 16:	Psalm 23:
The Lord's goodness (טוב, Strong 2896)	2 My <b>goodness</b> does not surpass thee	6 Surely <b>goodness</b> and mercy shall follow me
The name of God	4 nor take up their <b>names</b> into my lips	3 for his <b>name's</b> sake
David's cup (כוס, Strong 3563)	5 The LORD <i>is</i> the portion of mine inheritance and of my <b>cup</b>	5 my <b>cup</b> runneth over
Assurance	8 I shall not be moved	1 I shall not want
Restoring the soul (נַפְשׁוֹ, Strong 5315)	10 For thou wilt not leave my <b>soul</b> in hell	3 He restoreth my <b>soul</b>
Protection from death	10 <b>hell</b> ... <b>corruption</b>	3 the valley of the shadow of <b>death</b>
Covenant relation	10 thine <b>Holy One</b> חסיד	6 goodness and <b>mercy</b> חסד
Coming to the presence of the Lord	11 <b>in thy presence</b> <i>is</i> fulness of joy; <b>at thy right hand</b> <i>there are</i> pleasures for evermore.	6 I will dwell <b>in the house of the LORD</b> forever
Lead in path	11 Thou wilt <b>shew me the path</b> of life	3 he <b>leadeth me in the paths</b> of righteousness for his name's sake.
Life	11 path of <b>life</b>	6 all the days of my <b>life</b>

*Table 2: Similarities between Psalms 16 and 23*

### Psalm 16

**Psa 16:1**  
**Michtam מִכְתָּם of David.**--This term appears only here and in five other Psalms, with uncertain meaning (see notes).

**Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.**--This verse is a chiastic summary of the rest of the Psalm (Table 3, chart).

Verses 2-6

describe his trust in the Lord, while 7-11 talk about the Lord's preservation of him.

1 Preserve me, O God:	7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. 8 I have set the LORD always before me: because <i>he is</i> at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10 For thou wilt not <del>leave my soul in</del> abandon my soul to hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence <i>is</i> fulness of joy; at thy right hand <i>there are</i> pleasures for evermore.	
For in thee do I put my trust.	2 <i>O my soul</i> , thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou <i>art</i> my Lord: my goodness <del>extendeth not to</del> does not surpass thee; 3 <del>But</del> unto the saints that <i>are</i> in the earth, and <i>to</i> the excellent, in whom <i>is</i> all my delight.	5 The LORD <i>is</i> the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. 6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant <i>places</i> ; yea, I have a goodly heritage.
	4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied <i>that</i> hasten <i>after</i> another <i>god</i> : their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.	

*Table 3: Structure of Psalm 16*

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### 2-6, David's Trust in the Lord

Vv. 2-3 and 5-6 assert that David's full preoccupation is with the Lord, while v. 4 contrasts this with the false gods pursued by others.

**2 O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness ~~extendeth not to~~ does not surpass thee;**--"Goodness" (as in 23:6) refers not to David's personal virtue, but God's faithfulness and care toward him. He is confessing that the most valuable thing he possesses is the Lord himself. "Nothing good that I possess can go beyond you."

This insight lies at the heart of OT piety. We saw it in the first psalm we studied (chart):

Hab 3:17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: 18 Yet **I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God** of my salvation.

In fact, it is a direct consequence of the Shema:

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

If we love the Lord with all of our being, then we can value nothing more than we value him.

**3 ~~But~~ unto the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.**-- See the notes for translation. This verse is parallel to "to the Lord" in v. 2. Not only does David tell the Lord that the Lord is his highest good. He confesses this also to the saints with whom he is in community. We need to remind one another that the Lord must be our highest good.

These two confessions are the heart of our spiritual life. Confessing to the Lord that he is our highest good is *worship*; confessing it to one another is *fellowship*.

**4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.**--Having declared his total devotion to the Lord, David disowns any other loyalty.

**5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance חלק and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. 6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage נחלה.**-- Once again David declares that the Lord is all he wants. He may be recalling his words to Saul at the hill of Hachilah:

1 Sam 26:19: they have driven me out ... that I should have no share in the **heritage נחלה of the Lord**, saying, "Go, serve other gods".

Saul and his counselors have driven David away from enjoying the inheritance that Joshua allotted to the tribes. But David comforts himself with the thought of another group in Israel who had no inheritance. Note the repetition of key words between these verses:

Num 18:20 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance נחל in their land, neither shalt thou have any part חלק among them: **I am thy part חלק and thine inheritance נחלה** among the children of Israel.

The repeated theme in this section is that we must value the Lord above every other thing that he gives us. This is what it means to place our trust in him. Trust is not just a mental belief that he will care for us, but a commitment to value him above everything else.



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### 7-11, The Lord’s Preservation of David

Now David expounds the first half of his introductory verse, “Preserve me, O Lord.” The Lord preserves his children in four ways.

**7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.**--He *teaches* David as David meditates on him in quiet moments. If we treasure the Lord as our chief good, he will make his will known to us.

**8 I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth:**--He *protects* David, giving him confidence and joy.

**my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10 For thou wilt not ~~leave my soul in~~ abandon my soul to hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**--He *delivers* David from the fear of death, “the veil that is spread over all nations” (Isa 25:7).

Peter (on Pentecost in Acts 2:27-31) and Paul (in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia in Acts 13:35-38) both quote this verse, as a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ. Their observe that David did die and enter Sheol, and his body did rot, so he must be speaking about the Messiah—or rather, the voice we hear in the Psalm is the Messiah’s. He is the one who is trusting in God in vv. 2-6, and he is the one whom God is preserving in vv. 7-11. We (and David) enjoy these blessings because of our relation to him.

**11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.**--The final stage of God’s preservation of his saints is the promise of enjoying his presence forever. This is the heart of our Savior’s promise to his disciples in John 14:3, “that where I am, there ye may be also.”

We may summarize the Psalm, *By laying hold of the Lord as his chief good and rejecting the idols of others, David claims the Lord’s instruction, protection, deliverance from death, and everlasting presence.*

### Psalm 23

**Psa 23:1 A Psalm מְזֹמֶר of David.**

This Psalm has two important structural features (Table 4, chart). First, the grammatical person changes chiasmically from third person (vv. 1-3), to second (vv. 4-5), and back to third (v. 6).<sup>9</sup> Second, as in Psalm 16, the first line summarizes the whole, this time as an alternation.<sup>10</sup>

1 The LORD is my shepherd;	2 <b>He</b> maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.	Third Person
	4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for <b>thou art</b> with me; <b>thy</b> rod and <b>thy</b> staff they comfort me.	Second Person
I shall not want.	5 <b>Thou</b> preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: <b>thou</b> anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.	Third Person
	6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house <b>of the LORD</b> for ever.	Third Person

Table 4: Structure of Psalm 23

in Rom 2:7-10, among many other places.

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**The LORD is my shepherd;**--Boyce notes that this line is a deep paradox. "LORD" is יהוה, the solemn covenant name by which Israel came to know God at Sinai, the name that sets him apart from other ancient deities. Yet the task of a shepherd was one of the lowliest. In Jesse's family, it was assigned to the youngest son, to David (1 Sam 16:11). When he went to visit his brothers in the camp as they fought against the Philistines, his eldest brother mocked him, "with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" (1Sa 17:28). Yet here David confesses that it is one who is no less than Almighty God who takes personal responsibility for his well-being.

**I shall not want.**--With such a shepherd, indeed, we can want for nothing.

The image of the shepherd is pervasive in the NT to describe our Lord. Our Savior claimed this title in John 10. He is the good shepherd (John 10:11), the great shepherd (Heb 13:20), the chief shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). He was motivated in his ministry when he observed that Israel was "as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt 9:36). He claimed to fulfill Zech 13:7, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad" (Mat 26:31). The NT gives us ample warrant to understand this Psalm as describing the care of our Savior for his own.

But that linkage tells us something about our Shepherd Jesus. He is the Lord Jehovah. Psalm 16 emphasized our Lord's humanity, relying on his God to deliver him from death. Psalm 23 emphasizes his deity, describing him as the one who cares for us.

There is another implication of this title. Our Lord is the chief shepherd, whose example is to be emulated by elders in the church (1 Pet 5:4). As we consider how our Lord cares for his own, let us pay attention to ways in which we are to care for one another.

### 2-4, the Lord directs his sheep.

Each of the statements in this paragraph deals with God's direction and leadership.

**2 He maketh me to lie down [רבץ Hiphil] in green pastures:**--The reference is not to pasturing, but to giving the sheep rest during the heat of the day (chart):

Sol 1:7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, ... where thou makest *thy flock* to rest [רבץ Hiphil] at noon:

**he leadeth me beside the still waters [waters of resting].**--Again, the emphasis is on the rest that the sheep need.

**3 He restoreth my soul:**--The idiom means "to bring to life again," as Elijah asked the Lord to do for the Shunammite's son:

1Ki 17:21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's **soul come** into him **again**.

Or in David's petition:

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

Later, v. 5 speaks of David's enemies (v. 5). He knows what it is to fear for his life.

Elsewhere, David tells how God performs this work:

Psa 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, **converting the soul**:

## Psalms 15-24

This is not speaking of conversion, but of the contribution of God's word to our spiritual health, as the next clause amplifies.

**he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**-- "Paths of righteousness" are the ways of righteous conduct. Compare

Psa 5:8 **Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness** because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

Pro 8:20 I [wisdom] lead in **the way of righteousness**, in the midst of the paths of judgment: The shepherd directs the steps of the sheep in ways that are pleasing to him. They do not choose. He does, and communicates it to them.

**4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**--This term denotes the deepest, most depressing darkness, and is often associated with judgment:

Psa 44:19 Though **thou hast sore broken us** in the place of dragons, and covered us with the **shadow of death**.

Psa 107:10 Such as sit in darkness and in the **shadow of death**, *being* bound in affliction and iron; 11 **Because they rebelled against the words of God**, and contemned the counsel of the most High:

Jer 13:16 Give glory to the LORD your God, **before he cause darkness**, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, **he turn it into the shadow of death**, and make it gross darkness.

This association, and the following reference to God's rod, suggest that David may be speaking here, not just of sorrow, but of times of chastisement. But note his response:

**I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;**--Even in the midst of a divine spanking, he does not fear evil. He is aware of God's presence, and assured of his fatherly love.

**thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.**--These are two different implements. The rod is a cudgel for beating things, the staff a walking stick that can be used to guide the flock.

The rod is usually understood to be the shepherd's tool to drive away wild animals. But if "shadow of death" has overtones of chastisement, David may thinking of the rod in the sense that we often find it in Proverbs, as the implement of discipline. Even the Lord's chastisement upon him is a source of comfort, because it assures him of the Father's love.

### 5-6, the Lord provides for his Sheep

In this half of the Psalm, David emphasizes the provision that his Shepherd makes for him. He starts with physical provision, but then moves to more spiritual gifts.

**5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence [sight] of mine enemies:**--The implication is that David's enemies must look on as the Shepherd bountifully provides for his sheep. Recall David's experience with Nabal, who begrudged David any provision, only to be smitten with a stroke when he learned how the Lord had moved his wife to provide for David (1 Sam 25:37).

**thou anointest my head with oil;**--David extends the imagery of a banquet. Recall the expected marks of hospitality that our Lord recounts to Simon the Pharisee:

## Psalms 15-24

Luk 7:44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. 45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 **My head with oil thou didst not anoint:** but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

The Lord provides for David as for an honored guest.

**my cup runneth over.**--He has plenty to eat and to drink.

**6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:**--The combination of goodness and mercy טוב והסוד appears 45 times in the Bible, of which 24 pairs are in Psalms. Eleven of these pairs (six in the Psalms) are part of the common confession that “the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting.”<sup>11</sup> They are paired as divine attributes that lead to forgiveness:

Psa 25:7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy **mercy** remember thou me for thy **goodness'** sake, O LORD.

Psa 86:5 For thou, Lord, *art good*, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in **mercy** unto all them that call upon thee.

David is confident not just of coming prosperity, but of the Lord’s personal, covenant care for him. The association with forgiveness builds on our understanding of “shadow of death” and the shepherd’s “rod.” However he may stray from the shepherd’s direction, he is assured that the shepherd will patiently deal with him to bring him back to the right way.

**and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**--This is the objective that David expresses in the opening and closing Psalms of this section: to “abide in thy tabernacle” (15:1), to “stand in [God’s] holy place” (16:3). Those Psalms declare the high requirements for those who would attain to this end, but David in this Psalm has described the Shepherd’s faithfulness to discipline him, and bring him through discipline to forgiveness, so that he can walk in the paths of righteousness and attain the house of the Lord.

We may summarize: *David is confident that the Lord’s loving care, even through necessary chastisement, will bring him to eternal enjoyment of the Lord’s presence.*

The repeated reference to chastisement in Psalm 23 underscores how it complements Psalm 16 in referring to the Messiah (chart)

- The speaker in Psalm 16 has no hint of personal sin; the speaker in Psalm 23 is aware of his need for chastisement, yet is confident in the Lord’s love.
- In Psalm 16, the Messiah is speaking; in Psalm 23 David represents the believer speaking to, and about, the Messiah.
- Psalm 16 presents him as the crucified and risen son of man. Psalm 23 presents him as the divine Shepherd, the Lord.

## Psalms 17 and 22

11 1 Chr. 16:34; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3; Ezr. 3:11; Ps. 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; Jer. 33:11. See Millard, TB 17 (1966) 115-117 for evidence from NE treaties that this combination refers to God’s covenant with Israel.

## Psalms 15-24

Both are laments, the only ones in this section. Table 5 (chart) shows numerous correspondences that further emphasize the link between these two Psalms in the overall chiasm of Figure 2.

	Psalm 17	Psalm 22
God hears	1 <b>Hear</b> the right, O LORD, 6 for thou wilt <b>hear</b> me, O God:	21 for thou hast <b>heard</b> me 24 when he cried unto him, he <b>heard</b> .
Righteous	1 Hear the <b>right</b> , O LORD, 15 I will behold thy face in <b>righteousness</b> :	31 They shall come, and shall declare his <b>righteousness</b>
Abusive mouths	10 with their <b>mouth</b> they speak proudly.	13 They gaped upon me <i>with their mouths</i> ,
Surrounded	11 They have now <b>compassed</b> us in our steps:	12 Many bulls have <b>compassed</b> me: strong <i>bulls</i> of Bashan have beset me round.
Malevolent regard	11 they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;	7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
Enemy as a lion	12 Like as a <b>lion</b> <i>that</i> is greedy of his <b>prey</b> , and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.	13 They gaped upon me <i>with their mouths</i> , as a <b>ravening</b> and a roaring <b>lion</b> . 21 Save me from the <b>lion's</b> mouth:
Cry to the Lord קרא Strong 7121	6 I have <b>called</b> upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God:	2 O my God, I <b>cry</b> in the daytime,
Wicked cast down כרת Strong 3766	13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, <b>cast him down</b> :	29 all they that go down to the dust shall <b>bow</b> before him:
Soul	13 deliver my <b>soul</b> from the wicked, <del>which is</del> <i>by</i> thy sword:	20 Deliver my <b>soul</b> from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
God's face	15 As for me, I will behold <b>thy face</b>	24 neither hath he hid <b>his face</b> from him

*Table 5 : Comparing Psalms 17 and 22*

This similarity is suggestive. We see Psalm 22 as Messianic, because of its references to the crucifixion. We don't usually think of the Messianic implications of Psalm 17. But it emphasizes the righteous character of the one who is praying for God's help. In some of his psalms David is quite honest about his own sins, and when he protests his innocence, we naturally look beyond him to the Lord Jesus, who was tempted in all points, yet without sin (Heb 4:15).<sup>12</sup>

### **Psalm 17**

**1 A Prayer תפילה of David.**--This is the first of five Psalms that are designated "prayer," and the only one that comes before the third book. Two of the others (86, 142) are by David. Psalm 90, by Moses, is designated as a prayer, and so is the anonymous Psalm 102.

Most of the Psalms are addressed to God. In fact, Ps 72:20, in what looks like a postscript to the first two books of Psalms, applies this label to them all:

Psa 72:20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

<sup>12</sup> Not only does Psalm 17 correspond closely to Psalm 22, but it follows naturally on Psalm 16. See Notes.

## Psalms 15-24

But these five are singled out as particular examples of how we are to approach God.

The structure of the Psalm is dominated by the alternation of requests and statements. There are two main stanzas (Figure 3, chart). Each stanza has two paragraphs of request, substantiated by statements. In the first stanza (1-6), he asks for God’s attention and direction, based on his own claim of righteousness. In the second, he asks God to deliver him from the wicked, based on their conduct and their motives. The first stanza is a chiasm, while the second is an alternation. The last verse doesn’t really fit into either of these two stanzas, and that’s an anomaly. As a statement emphasizing David’s righteous ambitions, it would turn 1-6 into a nice alternation, strongly parallel to vv. 7-14, if it were reversed with those verses. We’ll come back to this anomaly later.

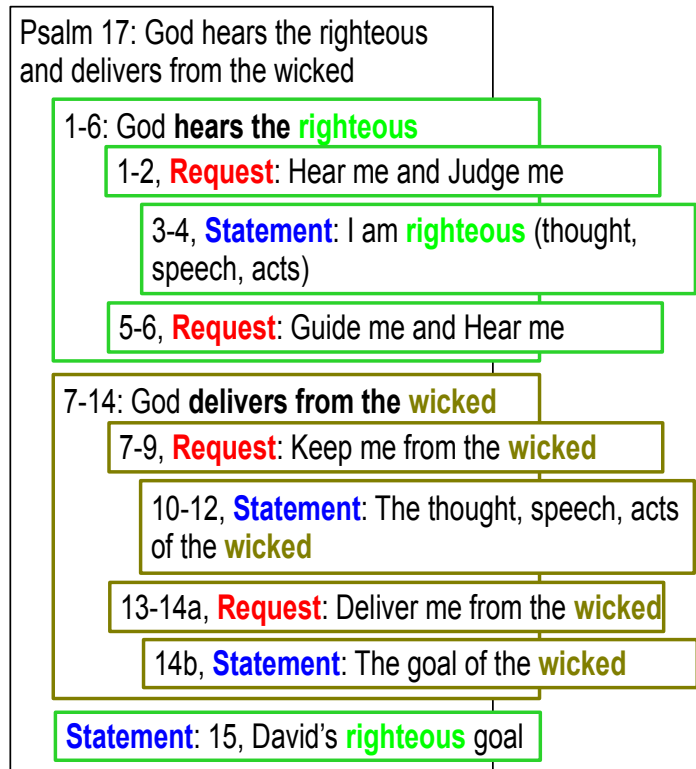


Figure 3: Structure of Psalm 17

### 1-6, God hears the righteous

#### Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto

**my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.**--At the outset, he is pleading for the Lord’s attention based on his righteousness. His cause is just, and his prayer is sincere.

**2 Let my sentence מִשְׁפָּט come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.**--He appeals to God as a judge, asking for God’s judgment מִשְׁפָּט (Strong 4941). “My” is objective genitive: he is inviting God to pass judgment on a case concerning him. Maclaren discusses connections of this Psalm with others of the period of Saul’s persecution, and we may understand David to be pleading with God to judge his case before the king.

This petition grounds the Psalm on the principle that Moses set forth:

Deu 25:1 If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment מִשְׁפָּט, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

The basic responsibility of a judge is to discern between the righteous and the wicked. This principle determines the shape of David’s prayer. Because King Saul will not judge rightly, David asks God to intervene. In making his case, he must both demonstrate his righteousness and show the wickedness of his adversary.

There is an important principle here: if those in positions of authority abuse us, we should look to God, the ultimate source of authority, to set things right.

David begins by claiming his righteousness, along three ethical dimensions: the thought life, speech, and actions.

## Psalms 15-24

**3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing;**--First he insists that his thoughts are right before the Lord.

**I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.**--Next he declares his purpose not to sin in his speech, which James insists is the most difficult area of personal righteousness.

**4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.**--Finally he claims that his conduct is right, guided by God's word.

We'll see these three dimensions again in the description of the wicked. They also align with two lists in Proverbs: the injunctions of Proverbs 4, and the things that the Lord hates in Prov 6:16-19 (Table 6, chart). Solomon adds a fourth dimension emphasizing our perception.

	Proverbs 4	Proverbs 6		Psalm 7	
Perception	25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.	17 A proud look,	and he that soweth discord among brethren.		11b they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth
Speech	24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.	a lying tongue,	19 A false witness that speaketh lies,	3b my mouth shall not transgress.	10b with their mouth they speak proudly.
Actions	26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. 27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.	and hands that shed innocent blood,	feet that be swift in running to mischief,	4 Concerning the works of men	11a They have now compassed us in our steps
Thoughts	23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.	18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,		3a Thou hast proved mine heart	10a They are inclosed in their own fat:

Table 6: Dimensions of Judgment

This is a useful checklist for our conduct. In both cases, the heart is the source. David puts it at the head of both of his lists. It leads Solomon's list in Proverbs 4, and comes at the center of the chiasm in Proverbs 6. Our Savior confirms this priority in his teaching,

Mat 15:14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. ... 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man:

After giving the central cause, the Lord goes on to list actions (murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts) and verbal sins (false witness, blasphemies), corresponding to the categories of David and Solomon. Like Solomon, he includes perception in their error, and earlier he taught,

Mat 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

These four dimensions are an important practical guideline to our ethical behavior. Righteous behavior starts with the heart, with our thoughts and desires. It manifests itself first in how we speak to others, but then surfaces in our actions. And our perception, where we choose to direct

## Psalms 15-24

our attention, feeds the heart and so influences our entire behavior. This principle is critical in motivating our choice of exposure to popular media.

The lists in Proverbs, and our Lord's teaching, include the role of perception, where one directs one's attention, and the reference to the eyes of the wicked in v. 11 may refer to that same dimension. Why does David omit it in his description of his own righteousness? This question is related to the structural anomalies we noted at the outset, and we'll come back to it.

Having presented his case, David returns to his request. Again, he asks God to hear him, but adds an important petition:

**5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.**--While David claims righteousness, he is not self-righteous. He recognizes his weakness, and prays that God will enable him to continue to live in a righteous manner.

**6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.**--He concludes the first section by again asking God to hear him, as he did in v. 1.

### 7-14, God delivers from the wicked

With his own innocence, he now contrasts the works and attitude of the wicked (B), and asks the Lord's protection against them (A). As in vv. 1-6, we have requests motivated by a description, but this time the order is an alternation, ABAB, rather than a chiasm, ABA. The ones described are wicked, not righteous, and the request is for deliverance instead of judgment.

**7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness,**--This beautiful expression warns us against becoming complacent in our salvation. As often, David invokes God's lovingkindness, his covenant love (רַחֲמִים), a root that appears more often in Psalms (130x) than in all the rest of the OT (255x total; see notes). But note how he describes it: it is marvelous, amazing, awe-inspiring.<sup>13</sup>

He now describes God's protection under three images, derived from two poems composed by Moses: the right hand, the eye, and the wing (chart).

**O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.**--This description recalls the destruction of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. The first time that God is said to save *עַם* somebody is in the description of this event:

Exo 14:30 Thus the LORD **saved** Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

And the first time we read of God's right hand deployed for his people is in the song with which Moses celebrated this victory:

Exo 15:6 **Thy right hand**, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. ... 12 Thou stretchedst out **thy right hand**, the earth swallowed them.

This figure emphasizes the *strength* with which God defends his people.

The next two figures are inspired by another song by Moses, his valedictory hymn in Deuteronomy 32:

<sup>13</sup> The expression appears only one other time, Ps 31:21, where the reference to "a strong city" suggests David's time in Ziklag.



## Psalms 15-24

Deu 32:10 He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him **as the apple of his eye**. 11 As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, **spreadeth abroad her wings**, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: 12 *So* the LORD alone did lead him, and *there was* no strange god with him.

**8 Keep me as the apple of the eye**,--The “apple of the eye” is the pupil, the most sensitive part of the body. This figure reminds us of the *pain* that God feels when his people are harmed.

**hide me under the shadow of thy wings**,--Finally, we are reminded of God’s *tenderness* in caring for his own.<sup>14</sup>

**9 From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about**.--v.7 characterized the adversary as “those that rise up,” but without specifying the one against whom the rise up (“against them” is italicized, and not in Hebrew). Now he characterizes them in two ways: they are the wicked who break God’s law, and his enemies who oppose him

The description of the wicked follows the same order as his self-description, vv. 3-5: the heart, the lips, and the actions, once again omitting the perception.

**10 They are inclosed in their own fat**:--The Bible often uses fat to describe something that encases the heart and makes it dull or insensitive (chart):

Psa 119:70 **Their heart is as fat as grease**; *but* I delight in thy law.

Isa 6:10 **Make the heart of this people fat**, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

David’s heart is responsive to the Lord, but the heart of his enemies is heavy and insensitive.

**with their mouth they speak proudly**.--In speech, they boast of their own greatness.

**11 They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; 12 Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places**.--Their actions are hostile, selfish, and destructive.

**13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is with thy sword: 14 From men which are with thy hand, O LORD**,--This is David’s second request for deliverance. Unlike his second request for God to hear him in vv. 5-6, this request does not close the paragraph, but rather leads to another characterization of the wicked.

This characterization doesn’t follow the pattern of heart-speech-action that we saw in both David’s claim to righteousness and his first description of the wicked. But interestingly, it does fill the gap that we saw there. Concerning the wicked, David said that their eyes were focused on the earth (v. 11), and this verse amplifies that description of their perception..

**from men of the world, which have their portion in this life**,--All they care about is this present life. Their perception doesn’t go beyond what they can enjoy now.

**and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure**:--The good that they enjoy comes from God’s hand, but they don’t recognize that and give thanks to him.

14 This expression is common in the Psalms of the Sauline persecution: Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7 (see headers on 57 and 63), and together with the “walled city” of 31:21, suggests that this Psalm may also date to that period.

## Psalms 15-24

they are full of [satisfied with שבע] children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.--The horizon of their expectations is limited by their children.

### 15, David's Goal

At first glance, the last verse of the Psalm doesn't seem to fit into the very regular structure of the others. But recall what we have seen about the four ethical dimensions. David claims righteousness based on three of them. The wicked offend in all four, and David has amplified the offense in their perception in his

	The Wicked, v. 14	David, v. 15
Satisfaction	they are <b>full</b> [satisfied שבע]	I shall be <b>satisfied</b> שבע
Temporal horizon	men of the <b>world</b> , <i>which have their portion in this life</i>	when I <b>awake</b>
Object of their attention	whose <b>belly</b> thou fillest ... <b>children</b>	<b>Thy face ... thy likeness</b>

*Table 7: Perception of the Wicked and of David*

second description of them as focused on this life. We are left with the question, "How does David perceive the world?" He has displaced the answer to this question to v. 15, in order to emphasize the contrast with the perception of the wicked in v. 14 (Table 7, chart).

**15 As for me,**--By placing the pronoun first, he emphasizes a contract between himself and those whom he was describing in the previous verse.

**I will behold thy face in righteousness:**--David's goal is not to see his children, but to see his God. But we know from Psalms 15 and 24 that this is only possible if David is righteous, a theme we saw also in 5:4-5, "neither shall evil dwell with thee." This is why he hungers and thirsts after righteousness—not out of pride, but in order to see God. His expectation is that God will keep him in God's paths (v. 5), so that he can attain this blessed goal.

**I shall be satisfied שבע, when I awake, with thy likeness.**--Notice three things about this concluding verse.

First, he describes his satisfaction, using the same verb (Strong 7646) that described the perception of the wicked. What satisfies us is the focus of our perception.

Second, notice the time frame of his satisfaction: "when I awake." The wicked are men of this "world" (עוֹלָם, emphasizing its limited duration), and are focused on "this life." David looks beyond to the resurrection.

Third, the object of his attention is not his current physical satiation or his descendants, but the anticipation of being with the Lord and seeing him in all his glory—the same preoccupation with God himself that we have seen repeatedly in our studies of the Psalms.<sup>15</sup>

We may summarize the Psalm, *David prays for the Lord to judge and protect him from the wicked, based on the contrast between them in thought, word, and deed, but most of all in where they focus their attention.*

<sup>15</sup> Delitzsch comments on this contrast, "The contrast is not so much between this life and the life to come, as between the world (life) and God. Here we see into the inmost nature of the Old Testament faith. To the Old Testament believer, all the blessedness and glory of the future life, which the New Testament unfolds, is shut up in Jahve. Jahve is his highest good, and possessing Him he is raised above heaven and earth, above life and death."

## Psalms 15-24

### Psalm 22

The NT frequently quotes or alludes to this Psalm regarding the sufferings of our Lord.

#### 1 A Psalm מזמור of David.

The Psalm falls into three parts, with different themes (Figure 4, chart).

In 1-11, marked by an inclusio, the Psalmist is confused at being forsaken by God, in spite of God's past kindness to him and his people.

In 12-21, marked by chiasmic ordering of the vicious animals that illustrate his enemies, he describes their opposition and cries to God for deliverance. This plea turns to exaltation with the cry, "Thou hast heard me" (v. 21).

In 22-31, he declares God's gracious salvation to a growing audience, culminating in all nations. This expanding audience reinforces the messianic emphasis of the Psalm, which emphasizes the dominion of David's heir over all the earth (cf. Psalm 72; Acts 1:8).

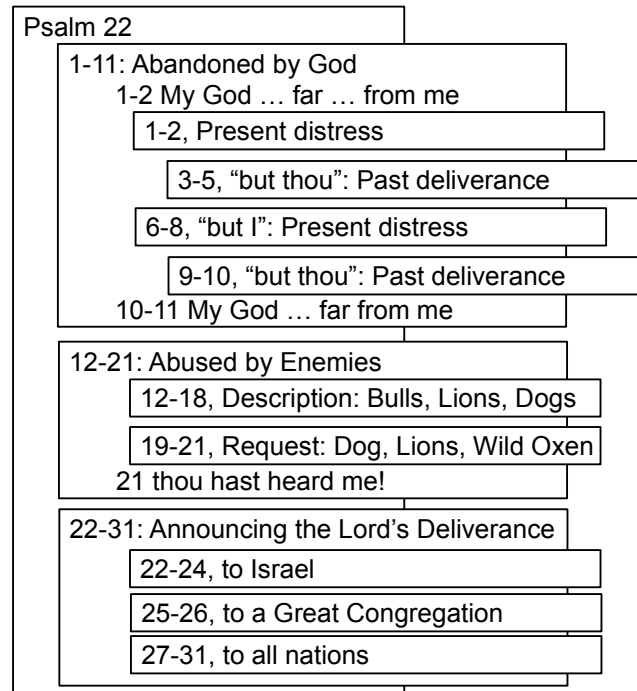


Figure 4: The Structure of Psalm 22

#### 1b-11, Abandoned by God

The section is marked by an inclusio in "my God" and "far from me." The material in between alternates between his cry to God (1-2, 6-8) and God's past history of faithfulness (3-5, 9-10), marked by verses that begin with the pronouns "thou" (v. 3), "I" (v. 6), "thou" (v. 9).

**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**--The NT allusions begin with the very first verse, which our Lord appropriates this Psalm to himself in his cry from the cross (chart):

Mat 27:46 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?

**why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?**--Throughout this section, David longs to be with the Lord, to abide in the Lord's tabernacle (15:1) and stand in his holy place (24:3), to seek the Lord's presence for evermore (16:11), to dwell in the house of the Lord forever (23:6). With such a desire, the ultimate tragedy is to feel that the Lord is far away.

The Psalmist senses that God has forsaken him, and doesn't know any reason why he should. Though he does not emphasize his righteousness in this Psalm, it is a prominent theme in Psalm 17, which the editor has matched with it in the overall structure of Psalms 15-24.

This is one of a number of Psalms in which the poet cries out in confusion to God, "Why are you doing this?"<sup>16</sup> We saw it earlier in Psalm 10, where David did not understand how a powerful God could fail to punish wicked people. This world is often inscrutable, and never more so than when we are suffering with no apparent reason. This Psalm encourages us in such times:

1. We are not the first to feel this confusion.

16 Ps. 10:1; 22:2; 42:10; 43:2; 44:24-25; 74:1, 11; 80:13; 88:15 (references to MT; search on למָה)

## Psalms 15-24

2. At the end, in God’s time, he *does* intervene, and he does so to maximize his glory.

**2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.**--In Psa 6:6, David described his lamentations at night, under God’s chastisement. But this distress is so strong that it distracts him during the day as well. Gill relates the daytime to our Lord’s time on the cross, while the night would be Gethsemene, or the darkness that the Lord brought over the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour (Luke 23:44).

**3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.**--The “but thou” introduces a new paragraph. His suffering is all the more bitter because he recalls God’s favor to the nation in the past, which is the basis for Israel’s worship.

The expression “inhabit the praises of Israel” יושב תהלות ישראל echoes the frequent<sup>17</sup> description of God as יושב הכרובים “dwelling between the cherubim,” that is, enthroned on the Ark of the Covenant. During Saul’s persecution of David, the ark is still in exile in the house of Abinadab in Kiriath Jearim (1 Sam 7:1; recall discussion of Psalms 15 and 24). The tabernacle was missing its centerpiece for nearly 70 years (see note and Table 11). But God was not excluded from his people. David realizes that wherever God’s people praise him, he rules. The imagery may be inspired by the Song of Moses,<sup>18</sup> where exalting God is compared to building him a resting place:

Exo 15:2 The LORD *is* my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he *is* my God, and **I will prepare him an habitation**; my father's God, and **I will exalt him**.

Three times he recalls how God faithfully **responded** to their **need**:

**4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.**

**5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered:**

**they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.**--How could God, who has been so faithful to his people in the past, now abandon him?<sup>19</sup>

**6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.**--Again the paragraph changes, “but I.” Not only he but his associates see that God has forsaken him.

**7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,**

**8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.**--

The alignment with the words of the religious leaders at the cross is striking (Table 8, chart). Did they know they were quoting the Psalm?

Psa 22:8 <b>He trusted</b> <span style="color: red;">επιζω</span> on the LORD	Mat 27:43 <b>He trusted</b> <span style="color: red;">πειθω</span> in God;
<i>that he would deliver</i> <span style="color: blue;">ψουμαι</span> him: <b>let him deliver him,</b>	<b>let him deliver</b> <span style="color: blue;">ψουμαι</span> him now,
seeing <b>he delighted</b> <span style="color: green;">θελω</span> in him.	if <b>he will have</b> <span style="color: green;">θελω</span> him:
	for he said, I am the Son of God.

Table 8: Alignment of 22:8 with Matt 27:43

**9 But thou art he that took me out**

**of the womb:**--Once again, the paragraph changes; once again, the focus is on God’s past faithfulness. In vv. 3-5 he recalled God’s faithfulness to the nation. Now he remembers God’s previous care for him.

17 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Ki. 19:15; 1 Chr. 13:6; Ps. 80:2; 99:1; Isa. 37:16

18 I am indebted to David Nelson for this observation. See notes for discussion of the translation.

19 Compare Psalm 44, of the sons of Korah, which recalls the Lord’s past faithfulness to Israel and then cries out twice, “Why?”

## Psalms 15-24

**thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.**--He owes life itself to the Lord; if God has given him nothing else, he has given him life.

**11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.**--He began by stating that God has forsaken him. Now, encouraged by recalling God's past faithfulness, he rises above a simple lament to cast his care on the Lord.

This alternation of discouragement and recollection offers an important principle. We tend to focus on present problems, and forget God's past blessings, both to us and to others. Counting our blessings is a powerful antidote to depression, and an incentive to cast our care on him.<sup>20</sup>

### 12-21, Abused by Enemies

Now we move from his sense of being forsaken by the Lord, to abuse from his enemies. He describes them as wild animals, listed chiastically. "Unicorn" in v. 21 (thus the LXX) is a wild ox, and corresponds to the bovine "bulls" in v. 12. Thus the section is chiasmic in the animals that describe his enemies: bulls—lion—dogs—dog—lion—unicorn (wild ox).

The first half of the chiasm describes the abuse; the second (19-21) asks the Lord to deliver.

**12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.**--

Repeatedly, he describes himself as surrounded by these enemies: here, v. 16, 17b "they look and stare upon me." He is not suffering in isolation, but (as already suggested by the mockery in vv. 6-8) others are looking on, rejoicing in his suffering.

**13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.**

**14 I am poured out like water,**--that is, dissipated beyond recovery (cf. 2 Sam 14:14).

**and all my bones are out of joint:**--The description is particularly appropriate to someone who is crucified, when the weight of the body pulls the arms from their sockets.

**my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.**--Before David, the expression appears only in Joshua: of the people of Jericho (2:11) and the kings of the Amorites (5:1) before Israel; of Israel before the men of Ai (7:5); of Israel at the report of the spies (14:8). In each case, it describes the terror that one feels when confronted with an overwhelming adversary.

**15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;**--Thirst was one of our Lord's symptoms on the cross:

Joh 19:28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, **I thirst.**

**and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.**--Note the subject. Though his enemies are active throughout this section, ultimately it is God who has brought him to this condition.<sup>21</sup> Nothing can happen to us that is outside of God's control, and he works all things together for good to those who love him (Rom 8:28; cf. Gen 50:20).

<sup>20</sup> This is Paul's argument in Romans 8. He recognizes the tribulation to which God's people are constantly subject (v. 36, quoting Psa 44:22), and including the threats of v. 35. He doesn't sugar-coat these conditions, but focuses our attention on God's faithfulness in other contexts (vv. 31-34), allowing us to triumph over the worst persecution (vv. 37-39).

<sup>21</sup> This combination of human malice and divine control was clear to the apostles: Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:27-28.

## Psalms 15-24

**16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:**--The third image of the enemies, like the bulls and the lion, has them surrounding him.

**they pierced my hands and my feet.**--The literal Hebrew text is "like a lion, my hands and my feet," which makes no sense. The LXX read the verb with different vowel points, giving the reading that is followed by all the ancient versions and by the KJV. Thus understood, it clearly points to our Lord's crucifixion, though the gospels nowhere quote this verse. They also do not say that his feet were pierced, but when the risen Lord wishes to confirm his identity to the disciples, his feet are part of the evidence:

Luk 24:39 **Behold my hands and my feet**, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40 And when he had thus spoken, **he shewed them his hands and his feet.**

**17 I may tell all my bones:**--probably because they protrude as a result of his strained position.

**they look and stare upon me.**--His enemies surround him and gawk at his suffering.

**18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.**--This verse is directly quoted as fulfilled at the cross:

Mat 27:35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, **They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.**

Now the Lord turns from describing the abuse that his enemies heap upon him, and asks for the Lord's intervention in his deliverance.

**19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD:**--This petition begins with the petition from v. 11. He asks the Lord to deal with each of the three enemies that he has described in vv. 12-18:

**O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. 21 Save me from the lion's mouth:**--The first two requests, for the dog and the lion, unfold as expected. We are ready for a third request, but are surprised:

**for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.**--Instead of a third request, "hear me," he suddenly becomes aware that God is no longer distant. The Lord has in fact heard him.

### 22-31, Announcing the Lord's Deliverance

He responds to this answer by announcing his deliverance. Successive paragraphs move from Israel, to "a great congregation," and culminating in "all the ends of the world," "all the kindreds of the nations." This expansion anticipates the charge given by the Lord in Acts 1:8 (chart),

Act 1:8 ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

It is easy for people to cry out to the Lord when they are suffering. But how seldom do we give thanks to the Lord when he delivers us.

The three paragraphs in this section are marked by three features.

1. Each begins with a *commitment* to praise, speaking to the Lord ("thee") about the worship he will receive.

## Psalms 15-24

2. Then he speaks about the Lord in the third person (“him”), in the first two cases speaking directly to the people involved (chart). We can call these sections the *call* to praise
3. In addition, he describes the *cause* for this praise, marked in the first and third sections with כִּי “for.”

### 22-24, Praise before Israel

**22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise הַלֵּל thee.**--He *commits* to praise the Lord first before a group that he calls his “brethren” and “the congregation.” “Brethren” is used as the apostles do in speaking to the Jews about the Messiah (Peter in Acts 2:29; Paul in 13:26). “Congregation” is a common term for the nation, and is especially prominent in Numbers, Deuteronomy, and 2 Chronicles.

The NT writers may have this verse in mind when they recall that when the risen Lord appeared to his disciples, he called them his “brethren” (chart):

Mat 28:10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell **my brethren** that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. [cf. John 20:17; Heb 2:12, 25]

The verb “praise” הַלֵּל (Strong 1984) occurs here and in vv. 23 and 26. This is the strongest concentration of this verb in the first book of Psalms, the only one that is higher than random.<sup>22</sup> The verb is particularly characteristic of Book 5, in the expression הַלְלוּ יְהוָה, “Praise ye the Lord.” Here, this final triumph is rooted in the suffering of the innocent servant of the Lord.

**23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise הַלֵּל him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.**--The *call* to praise is focused on the nation, described as those who fear the Lord, the seed of Jacob, and the seed of Israel. Note in particular the term “seed,” emphasizing the family relation of his original people.

**24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.**--The *cause* for praise is that the Lord did hear his cry. Recall the sudden turn at the end of v. 21, “thou **hast** heard me.”

### 25-26, Praise before a Great Congregation

Next, he turns to a large company of people, this time without any ethnic restriction.

**25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation:**--Now he *commits* to praise the Lord before “a great congregation,” many people. In Psalms (22:26; 35:18; 40:10-11), this expression always describes the speaker’s resolve to advertise the Lord’s deliverance as widely as possible. It is not restricted to Israel, and in Ezek. 17:17; 38:4 it describes pagan armies.

**I will pay my vows before them that fear him. 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise הַלֵּל the LORD that seek him:**--The audience is qualified in three ways: they fear the Lord, they are meek, and they seek him.

Why will the meek eat? The vow offering that David promises in 25b is one of the peace offerings described in Lev 7:11-16. David promises to “pay my vows,” suggesting that in crying out to the Lord in his misery, he had promised a sacrifice if he were delivered.

<sup>22</sup> See notes for a density plot.

## Psalms 15-24

Most sacrifices could only be eaten by the priests, but the peace offerings formed the basis for a festival meal that was shared with many people. David promises to involve the meek and those who fear the Lord in this great celebration.

It is tempting to associate this promised festival meal with the Lord's table.<sup>23</sup> But the offering by the Lord that we remember there was not a peace offering. It was the burnt offering of his bodily obedience to the Father, and the sin offering of his blood to wash away our sin. This vow offering has yet to be made, when the Lord returns,

Isa 25:6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

The Lord's table looks back to his death; this promised feast is the Savior's vow offering in gratitude to his Father for his resurrection.

**your heart shall live for ever.**--This clause may be a *cause* for praise, though it is not marked with יָ. They are to praise the Lord for the life that they will enjoy through the Servant.

### **27-31, Praise before All the Earth**

**27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.**--Now the commitment reaches its maximum breadth.

This time the cause for praise surrounds the call to praise.

**28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.**--The first motive is that the Lord rules over all nations. At first glance this appears to be incongruous with the rest of the Psalm, and some liberal scholars suggest that vv. 28-31 are a later addition to the Psalm. But the NT makes it clear that our Lord's coming exaltation rests on his past humiliation.

Phi 2:8 he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9  
**Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,** and given him a name which is above every name:

**29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.**--This verse recalls 26. Again, those who recognize what the Lord has done are invited to the sacrificial feast, recognizing that their very life depends on him. This time, the participants are the nations, not just Israel.

**30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born,**--As in v. 23, we hear of "a seed." But this time, it is not the seed of Jacob or of Israel. It is a people that is yet to be born, the true seed of Abraham that embraces all who come to God by faith (Rom 4).

**that for he hath done this.**--Here is the final cause for praise: God has accomplished his purpose. Just as the Lord begins his sufferings with the first words of this Psalm, he may have this final clause in mind when he cries out, "It is finished!"

23 Thus Delitzsch: "How natural, then, is the thought of the sacramental eucharist, in which the second David, like to the first, having attained to the throne through the suffering of death, makes us partakers of the fruits of his suffering!"



# Psalms 15-24

## Psalms 18 and 20-21

The analysis in Figure 2 aligns Psalm 18 with the pair of Psalm 20 and Psalm 21.

- Both of these units are focused on the king (18:50; 20:9; 21:1), God’s anointed (18:50; 20:5).<sup>24</sup>
- Psalm 18 records the prayer of the king and the Lord’s answer. Psalm 20 is a request for the king’s deliverance, and Psalm 21 records the answer.

### Psalm 18

The Psalm is built around two stories (Figure 5, chart).<sup>25</sup>

- In the **first** story, David is passive, and the Lord is his hero. In the **second**, he is active, and the Lord is his helper. These two pictures of our relation to the Lord dominate the entire Psalm.
- The climax requires righteousness and trust for receiving this deliverance.
- The introduction promises praise to the Lord, while the conclusion delivers it. Key words integrate these and the climax.

#### 1a, Title

**1 A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD,**--This title, found also in Psalm 36, reminds us that David is one of the select group of people described in the OT as “the servant of the Lord” or “my servant.”<sup>26</sup> Isaiah picks it up as a title for the Messiah, alerting us to expect messianic applications, and we will not be disappointed.

**who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,**--This note shows that the Psalm was written after the death of Saul in 1 Sam 1, and also echoes 2 Sam 7:1:

2Sa 7:1 And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies;

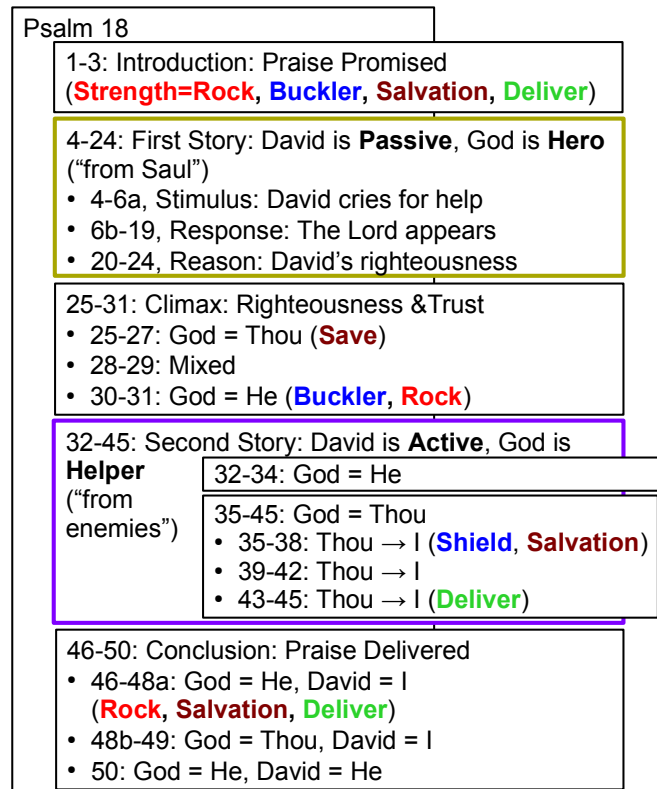


Figure 5: Structure of Psalm 18

24 “Anointed” is rare in Psalms (10x in all); these are the first instances after Ps 2:2. Within Psalms 15-24, the only other reference to the king is at end of Ps 24, where the King of Glory is uniquely qualified to ascend into the hill of the Lord.

25 See Longacre (*JOT* 2:1, 2006, 17-30) for this analysis, supported by the Hebrew verb forms.

26 Others include Job, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Eliakim, and Zerubabbel. Exceptionally, Nebuchadnezzar is also called God’s servant, Jer 25:9; 27:6; just as Cyrus is called his anointed, Isa 45:1.

## Psalms 15-24

The Messianic emphasis in the Psalm suggests that it follows Nathan's message in 2 Samuel 7.<sup>27</sup>

The summary identifies two deliverances: from his enemies (the Philistines in 1 Sam 23, 27, 30; 2 Sam 5), and from Saul. These align with the two stories. The first story is appropriate to his life as a refugee from Saul, while the second describes his ascendance over the Gentiles.

### 1b-3, Introduction

He begins speaking to the Lord, then speaks about him.

**I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.**--The word "love"<sup>28</sup> indicates deep, tender emotion.

**2 The LORD is my rock סלע, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength צור, in whom I will trust; my buckler מגן, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.**--Many of these descriptions<sup>29</sup> return in the central summary of the Psalm and in the conclusion.<sup>30</sup>

**3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.**--Better, "I call the Lord 'the praised one.'<sup>31</sup>, for<sup>32</sup> I am saved from mine enemies." This Psalm is David's obedience to the principle of Psa 107:2, "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy."

### 4-24, First Story: David is Passive, God is his Hero

The first story describes how "the LORD delivered [David] ... from the hand of Saul." It encourages believers who face overwhelming obstacles to trust God's absolute power. David tells how he cried to the Lord, how the Lord answered him, and why the Lord answered him.

#### 4-6a, David's Conduct: He Cries for Help

**4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. 5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God:**--David is helpless before death, hell, and ungodly people, described as "floods." He is submerged and about to drown.

#### 6b-19, Response: The Lord Appears

**he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.**--Though God is exalted on high, he hears those who love him (cf. Isa 57:15). David describes his response with images like those in Ex 15:3-10 (the Lord destroyed Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea) and Jdg 5:4-5 (the Lord destroyed the army of Jabin king of Hazor, led by Sisera).

**7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wrath. 8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.**--The Lord is angry, because his child is hurting. Recall 17:8: God's people are "the apple of his eye."<sup>33</sup> God may chastise them, but always in love, and their abusers will suffer his wrath, who says, "Vengeance is mine" (Rom 12:19).

27 Maclaren puts it just before Nathan's prophecy, but the emphasis on the Lord's anointed suggests otherwise.

28 רחם Strong 7355 is not the usual word for our love for God (אהב, Strong 157, as in Deut 6:5).

29 Characteristic of Psalms during his flight from Saul, see notes.

30 This is another example of Lund's third law of chiasmic structure, see footnote 3.

31 See HALOT Qal 2d, double accusative: to call someone by a name (though they do not put this verse in this category). Thus Gn 26:33; Nu 32:41; Is 60:18.

32 HALOT 19, which lists Ps 60:13 (ET v.11) as an instance where 1 means "because."

33 Zech 2:8 uses the same image to explain God's wrath on Babylon.

## Psalms 15-24

**9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness *was* under his feet.**

**10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.--**Hearing David's plea, and stirred to anger, he intervenes, pictured as a thunderstorm.<sup>34</sup>

**11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him *were* dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies. 12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail *stones* and coals of fire. 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail *stones* and coals of fire. 14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.--**The bolts of lightning are seen as the Lord's arrows, attacking his enemies.

This verse has been a great encouragement to saints who have cancer—a condition that leaves the victim feeling helpless. When radiotherapy and the sharpest surgeon's knife cannot discern good cells from bad, God's arrows can zero in on all that threatens us.

Now the story turns from God's destruction of the enemy, to his deliverance of his beloved one.

**15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.--**The imagery here goes back to the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 15:8 “the blast of thy nostrils”), when the Lord opened a path through the waters so that Israel could go over on dry ground.

**16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.--**In v. 4, David is about to drown, but now the Lord blows the waters apart (cf. Exodus 15) and pulls him out.

**17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. 18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. 19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered **ללך** me, because he delighted in me.--**David's fervent love for the Lord (v. 1) is a response to God's delight in him.

### **20-24, Reason: David obeys the Lord.**

Having described *what* God did in delivering him from Saul, David now tells us *why*.

**20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22 For all his judgments *were* before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. 24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.--**His claim recalls Psalm 17, and is consistent with the requirements of Psalms 15 and 24 for those who would approach the Lord. How can we reconcile this claim with what we know about David?

1. 2 Samuel 7 is before David's sin with Bathsheba. When he did commit that sin, the Lord withdrew his protection, and the rest of his story shows the consequences.<sup>35</sup>
2. We can understand his claim to state that he did not deliberately rebel against the Lord.
3. Ultimately, the reference is messianic (Gill).

34 Compare God's intervention in a thunderstorm in Jos 10:11 and Jdg 5:20-21. The Ugaritic archive has shown that the dominant deity in Canaanite religion, Baal, was the god of the thunderstorm. But the Lord's thunderstorm is more powerful than Baal's.

35 An important argument for dating the Psalm around 2 Sam 7, and not at the end of David's life, 2 Sam 22.

## Psalms 15-24

### 25-31, The Central Summary

Grammatically, these central verses are not a story. Their complex structure (Figure 6, chart) highlights the two themes: God is the hero of the afflicted and the helper of the righteous.

1. David speaks *to* God in 25-27, but *about* him in 30-31, while in 28-29 the pronouns are mixed.

2. The outer paragraphs (with pure pronouns) repeat three of the key words from v. 2: salvation, the buckler/shield, and the rock.

3. The outer paragraphs emphasize different virtues. Vv. 25-27 tell us that God treats the righteous differently than he treats the wicked, a theme that David has already emphasized at the end of the first story. Vv. 30-31 say nothing about our righteousness, but exhort us to trust in our righteous God. These two principles of faith and works run through all of Scripture. Recall the hymn, “Trust and Obey.”

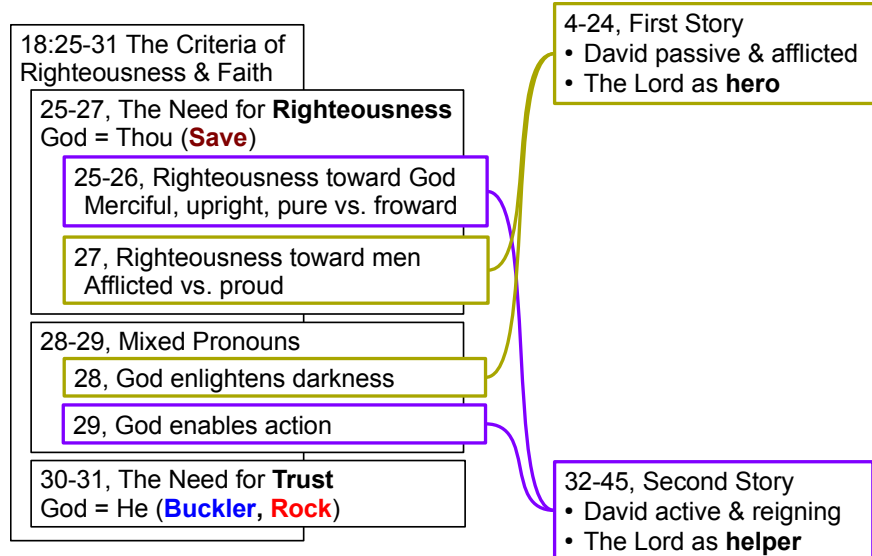


Figure 6: Central Summary in 25-31

#### **25-27, The Need for Righteousness: God = Thou**

The first paragraph of the summary contains two contrasts. Both state that how God treats people depends on characteristics of the people themselves.<sup>36</sup>

David’s first contrast recommends righteousness rather than rebellion against the Lord:

**25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man (man of תמיים, Strong 8549, perfection, completeness, integrity) thou wilt shew thyself upright; 26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.**--This anticipates the second story. David must rule with mercy, integrity, and purity.

The second contrast focuses less on our God-ward conduct, more on our relation to one another:

**27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.**<sup>37</sup>--This contrast recalls the first story. David is afflicted, suffering from Saul’s pride of Saul, and God saved him.

#### **28-29, Mixed Pronouns**

These two verses describe the Lord’s help in the two circumstances illustrated in the stories.

**28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.**--First he describes himself as in darkness (cf. night, Psalms 3-6), an apt summary of the first story.

<sup>36</sup> The NT continues to emphasize this principle. Compare the parallels in vv.25-27 with 2 Tim 2:11-13.

<sup>37</sup> Solomon echoes this verse, in inverse order, in Prov 3:34, which in turn is quoted in James 4:6 and 1 Pet 5:5.

## Psalms 15-24

**29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.**--By contrast, in v. 29 David is leading the charge, but acknowledges the Lord's enabling.

**30 As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler מִגָּן to all those that trust in him. 31 For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock צִוּר save our God?**--“As for God” contrasts with God's people in 25. The Lord is the true Righteous One. His way is perfect תָּמִים Strong 8549, translated “upright” in 25. His word is tried צִוּרָה Strong 6884, which refers to a metal that has been smelted or refined, and thus corresponds to “pure” in 18:26. Those who trust in him find him “merciful.” Thus he meets all three requirements of v. 25. The Accuser cannot touch him...or them, when they take refuge (הִסָּה Strong 2620) in him. This alignment between v. 25 and v. 30 anticipates the NT teaching that we are “in Christ” and his righteousness is imputed to us, so that we are “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6).

### 32-45, Second Story: David is Active, God is his Helper

The second story describes how “the LORD delivered [David] from the hand of all his enemies,” in particular, the Philistines, whom he overcame both before and after the death of Saul. Here, David is active, but enabled and guided by the Lord. This story instructs the disciple to whom the Lord has given a job, and teaches us to rely on his strength and direction.

David first tells how God (“he”) has equipped him to do the work that God requires of him. Then he speaks to God (“thou”), recalling how the Lord has enabled him to perform his kingly duties.

#### 32-34, God in Third Person

**32 It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect תָּמִים.**--Here is the integration of the requirement of 18:25 for man to be upright תָּמִים and God's intrinsic perfection תָּמִים in v. 30. God strengthens those who take refuge in him to live according to his law.

**33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.**--Habakkuk picked up this verse in 3:19 to describe the skill and agility that God gives his servants.

**34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.**--In particular, the Lord enables David to triumph in war over his enemies, as recalled in the historical preface.

#### 35-45, God in Second Person

Now he speaks to God, recalling his past help. David alternates between describing God's enabling, and what he has done with that enabling (chart). In the second element of the third panel, the subject changes from David to the heathen to emphasize the goal of the whole process.

**35 Thou hast also given me the shield מִגָּן of thy salvation:  
and thy right hand hath holden me up,  
and thy gentleness hath made me great.**

**36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.**--In the first panel, God strengthens David. The key words “shield” and “salvation” from v. 2 recur here.

**37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them:  
neither did I turn again till they were consumed.**

**38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise:**

**they are fallen under my feet.**--As a result, David is enabled to pursue his enemies diligently.

## Psalms 15-24

**39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.**

**40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies;**--In the second panel, God not only strengthens David, but delivers up his enemies so that David can subdue them.

**that and I might destroyed them that hate me.**

**41 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them*: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.**

**42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind:**

**I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.**--In response, David carries out God's judgment. In v. 41 that while God is abundantly helping David, he does nothing for his enemies.

**43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people;**

**and thou hast made me the head of the heathen:**--God enables David in order to give him dominion over the Gentiles. "Deliver" is another key word from v. 2.

The two lines are related.<sup>38</sup> The first describes David's deliverance from Saul and other internal tumult. He does not conquer them, but trusts in the Lord to maintain his right. God's purpose in preserving him from this internal strife is that he might then rule the heathen, in the second line..

The messianic application comes strongly into focus here. God delivered our Savior from the strivings of his people by raising him from the dead after they had rejected him. He did this so that the Messiah can go on to rule over the nations.

**a people whom I have not known shall serve me.**

**44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.**

**45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.**--By changing the subject of the clauses from himself to the Gentiles, David focuses our attention on this panel as the climax. The fulfillment of his royal mandate is to bring all the earth in subjection to his God.

### 46-50, Conclusion

Once again, changes in grammatical person guide our analysis of the passage.

#### 46-48a, God in Third Person, David in First Person

**46 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock צורִי; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. 47 It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the peoples under me. 48 He delivereth me from mine enemies:**--As in 2 and 25-31, the key words crowd together. "People" in v. 47 is plural, "peoples," the Gentiles. Thus vv. 47 and 48 repeat the key insight in v. 43: that God *delivered* David (and ultimately the Messiah) from internal strife within Israel in order to enable him to *conquer* and subdue the pagan nations.

#### 48b-49, God in Second Person, David in First Person

**yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.**--Paul quotes v. 49 in Romans to explain Gentile conversions:

<sup>38</sup> The version in 2 Sam 22 makes this clear by changing "people" to "my people" and replacing "thou hast made me" with "thou has kept me to be."

## Psalms 15-24

Rom 15:8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers: 9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, **For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.**

In the Psalm, David says that he will thank God among the heathen. What David did is irrelevant to Paul's argument, but if the speaker here (as in Psalm 16) is the Messiah, it makes perfect sense: the Messianic king declares that he will praise God in the presence of the Gentiles.

### **50, God and David in Third Person**

**50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.**--The Psalm closes celebrating God's covenant faithfulness to the line of the Messiah. "Seed" echoes the promise of 2 Sam 7.

### **19:1, Subscript**

**To the chief Musician.**--This composition is delivered to the choirmaster for public worship.

### **Psalms 20-21**

As in Psalms 3-14, in Hebrew, two similar psalms follow the pinnacle.<sup>39</sup>

- The first asks for the Lord's help in battle, while the second thanks God for victory (chart).
- Both are organized by changes in who is speaking to or about whom.
- Each alternates two longer paragraphs with two bicola.

In the overall chiasm (Figure 2, chart), we associate this pair of Psalms with Psalm 18, because

- Both are focused on the king (18:50; 20:9; 21:1), God's anointed (18:50; 20:5), and
- Both record the king's prayer, and the subsequent deliverance (chart).

But there is a striking difference between these Psalms and Psalm 18. In Psalm 18, written around the time of 2 Samuel 7, David presents his innocence as the reason that God favors him (18:20-24). Psalms 20-21 make no such claims. The basis for his deliverance is his faith and God's covenant faithfulness, not David's personal righteousness:

Psa 21:7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.

These two Psalms are probably written under very different circumstances. Let's see if we can place them in David's life.

Two verses in Psalm 21 align strikingly with 2 Samuel 12. Recall the historical context (chart).

- 11:1-27 records David's sin, while Joab and the army are besieging Rabbah of **Ammon**.
- In 12:1-12, Nathan rebukes him. Note in particular v. 9: "thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, ... and hast slain him with the sword of the children of **Ammon**. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house..."
- In 12:13-25, David repents, the first child dies, and Solomon is born.

39 There, we argued that they are a single Psalm. Here, they are separate, but closely related.

## Psalms 15-24

Meanwhile, the battle for Rabbah continues. In 12:27-28, Joab summons David to complete the conquest. Imagine how David feels. The Ammonites slew Uriah. God has told him that the sword will not depart from his house. The last place he wants to go is Ammon during a war. Yet Joab is correct: David as king must lead his people in carrying out the program of Deuteronomy 20.

Psalm 20 records David's preparation for going to Rabbah. He offers prayers and sacrifices, and the people implore the Lord to preserve their king. Then he goes to war.

In 12:29-31, David conquers Rabbah, and returns safely to Jerusalem. Psalm 21 would be written in response to this victory. Two details command our attention.

- In 2 Sam 12:30, "he took **their king's crown** from off his head, the weight whereof *was* a **talent of gold** with the precious stones: and it was *set on David's head*." Psalm 21:3 records, "**thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head**."
- In 2 Sam 12:31, "he brought forth the people that *were* therein, ... and made them pass **through the brickkiln**: ... Psalm 21:9 records, "Thou shalt make them as **a fiery oven** in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them in his wrath, and the **fire** shall devour them."

If this reconstruction is correct, David writes these Psalms not as the triumphant king newly installed in Jerusalem of 2 Samuel 7, but as a man who has been broken by sin and repentance, and is totally dependent on God's covenant mercy. This contrast points to a major lesson for us:

- We should recognize God's favor on the righteous, and always seek to obey him.
- But God restores those who repent, and they can still win victories for him.

### Psalm 20

#### 20:1 A Psalm מְזוֹמֵר of David.

The Psalm has four parts, distinguished by changes in the pronouns referring to the Lord, the King, and the speaker (Figure 7, chart). The order moves clockwise, starting with what the people say to the king.

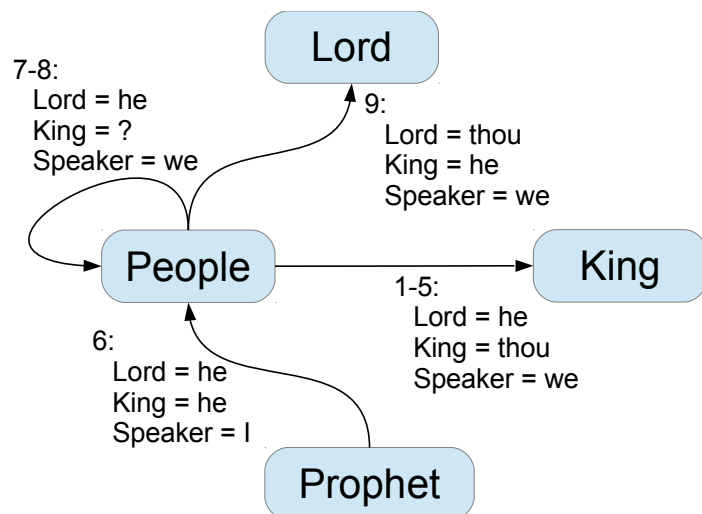
The scene is one of prayer to the Lord before the king enters a critical battle.

#### 1-5, *The People encourage the King.*

The main body of the paragraph consists of seven petitions, expressed in the third person: "May the Lord do thus and so for thee."

**The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble;**--The trouble is that David is called into battle at the scene of his sin. He fears that God may kill him where he slew Uriah.

**the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;**--The people appeal, not just to God, but to his name. In the OT, the name expresses all that a person is. The people pray that God's full person and character will gather round the king and protect him.





## Psalms 15-24

**2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;**--These two petitions view God's sanctuary on Zion as the source of Israel's power. Recall 18:6b, "he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears."<sup>40</sup>

**3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.**--Given his apprehension at the approaching battle, it is not surprising that David would offer sacrifices before proceeding into battle. The practice may have been common. We have one other example in the OT. When Samuel anointed Saul to be king, a major motive was to defend Israel against the Philistines. Samuel instructed him to meet at Gilgal, the site of Israel's first encampment, to prepare for the following events by sacrifice (chart):

1Sa 10:8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, *and* to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

Saul did go to Gilgal, but offered the sacrifices before Samuel arrived (13:8-12). Saul lost the kingdom for disobeying Samuel. But his error was not in supposing that sacrifices were appropriate in preparing for war. Rather, it was in not waiting for Samuel.<sup>41</sup> It was Samuel's idea to offer sacrifices before battle, and David is on solid ground in repeating the practice.

**4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.**--The final request is that God will realize the vision of the king.

**5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners:**--This bicolon deviates from the usual pattern of third person petitions in this first section, indicating the interest of the people in the Lord's answer.

**the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.**--The seventh petition summarizes the previous six, and asks that the Lord will do what the King has asked in his sacrifice.

This section is a lovely example of the importance of believers upholding one another's prayers. The king is praying, as the last of the seven petitions makes clear. But he is not praying alone. The people are upholding him, as we should uphold one another in our prayer.

### **6, The Prophet declares the word of the Lord**

**6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.**--The speakers so far are "we," but now a single voice, "I," cries out, assuring the people that God will hear the king's prayer. The speaker is probably a priest officiating at the sacrifice, or a prophet.

2 Chronicles 20 reflects three steps in Psalms 20-21. Jehoshaphat and his army are facing an attack from the Moabites and the Ammonites. First, Jehoshaphat gathers the people in prayer:

2Ch 20:3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4 And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. 5 And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, 6

40 Solomon's prayer in dedicating the temple (1 Kings 8) focuses on the efficacy of prayers directed there when the nation faces a time of need. Rev 11:19; 14:14-20; 15:5-16:1; and 19:11 all picture God's final triumph over evil as coming from the heavenly temple.

41 Recall the judgment that fell on Uzziah for offering incense (2 Chr 26:16-21). Kings and Priests are always separate in the OT, except for Melchizedek, and the final Messianic king/priest (Ps 110).

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And said, O LORD God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven? and rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

His prayer continues through verse 12, with the support of the people in v. 13. In the second step, corresponding to Ps 20:6, another voice breaks in:

2Ch 20:14 Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; 15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's. ...

In response to this oracle of salvation, Jehoshaphat leads the people in thanksgiving (vv. 18-19). In the third step, they enjoy a great victory, which (as in Psalm 21) they celebrate in song:

2Ch 20:28 And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD.

These events follow the pattern of Psalms 20-21.

### **7-8, The People express their trust in the Lord**

**7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.**--Unbelievers cannot stand the presence of the Lord, and trust in machinery. As in v. 1, Israel's trust is not just in the Lord, but in his name, what he has revealed about himself.

**8 They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.**--With such a defender, no one can stand against them.

### **9, The people finally speak directly to the Lord.**

**9 Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.**<sup>42</sup>--They recognize that the king's ability to protect them depends on the Lord's protecting the king. This principle applies even with pagan rulers, for Paul exhorts us,

1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

The foundation of a stable society is people who pray regularly for their rulers.

**To the chief Musician**—This and the next Psalm are preserved for public worship.

## Psalm 21

### **21:1 A Psalm מְזוֹמֵר of David.**

Again, the Psalm is divided by shifts in the pronouns (Figure 8, chart). This time, only the people speak, but as in Psalm 20,

- Each of two longer sections is followed by a shorter section;
- The first short section is addressed to the people, about both the Lord and the King;

42 LXX divides after הַמֶּלֶךְ, giving "O Lord, save the king; hear us when we call." Thus the first line echoes 6a. AV follows MT accentuation. Is הַמֶּלֶךְ perhaps a case of double-duty?

## Psalms 15-24

- The second short section is addressed directly to the Lord.

The difference is in the order, clockwise in Psalm 20 (starting with the king and ending with the Lord), but counterclockwise in Psalm 21 (starting and ending with the Lord).

### **1-6, The People praise God for delivering the King**

**The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!**--Now the combat is over, and the people rejoice in the salvation that God has provided.

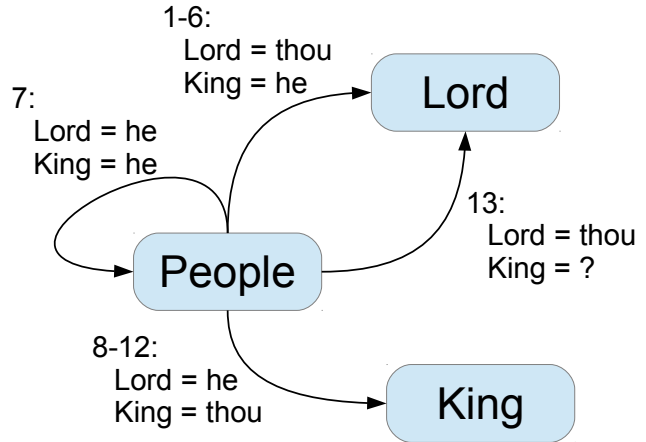


Figure 8: Structure of Psalm 21 (counterclockwise)

**2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.**--We have heard echoes of that prayer in Psalm 20.

**3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.**--As we have seen, this probably refers to the conquest of Rabbah in 2 Samuel 12.

**4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. 5 His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. 6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.**

--The emphasis on God's countenance (פָּנֵיךְ Strong 6440) is common in Psalms 15-24 (chart):

Psa 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in **thy presence** is fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

Psa 17:15 As for me, I will behold **thy face** in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Psa 24:6 This *is* the generation of ~~them~~ that seek him; [those] that seek **thy face**, Θ are Jacob.

It aligns with the desire in Pss 15, 24 to ascend into the Lord's holy hill, where he dwells.

The longing after God's face is in striking contrast with the attitude of Adam and Eve:

Gen 3:8 Adam and his wife hid themselves from the **presence** of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Recall the "rebellious people" of Isaiah 30, who ask their prophets,

Isa 30:11 cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us [from our **face**].

David has reason to be glad of God's countenance. As a sinner, he would have reason to fear it, but he has experienced the Lord's mercy, as we will see in Psalm 32.

A person's attitude toward the presence of the Lord is a powerful indicator of his spiritual state. If we are in a right relation with the Lord, loving him more than anything else (Deut 6:5), we want to be with him. We will spend time meditating in his word, praying, and gathering with his people—not as a duty, but because his presence is the greatest joy we can anticipate. But if we

## Psalms 15-24

shy away from his presence, as Adam and Eve did in the garden, we need to examine our lives to see if some unconfessed sin is making us ashamed to come before him.

### **7, The People recall the reciprocal relation between the King and the Lord**

**7 For the king trusteth בטה in the LORD, and through the mercy חסד of the most High he shall not be moved.**--In explaining his victory, David does not invoke his own righteousness, for he now knows, through his experience with Bathsheba, how weak he is. Rather, he emphasizes God's covenant love, and his own attitude of faith.<sup>43</sup>

### **8-12, The People encourage the King in defending them**

**8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger פניך: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.**--"Thine anger" is, in Hebrew, "thy presence, thy face," as in v. 6. There, it refers to the Lord; here, to the king, who represents the Lord. But note the different effect. The righteous king seeks the face of the Lord, while to the wicked, it is a sign of judgment.

The reference to being devoured by fire recalls the brickkilns at the conquest of Ammon.

**10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. 11 For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. 12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.**--Now "their face" is confronted with the face of the Lord, which they cannot overcome.

### **13, The People praise the Lord**

**13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.**--Though the Lord's intervention enables the king to protect the people, it is the Lord, and not the King, who receives the people's final praise.

**To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar,**--The expression means "Hind [female deer] of the morning."<sup>44</sup> The sun ascends into the heavens with the surefootedness of the young antelope (cf. 18:33). After the darkness of his sin, this victory is like the sun rising over him.

In summary, victory is from the Lord. He gives victory to the righteous, but also to the sinful, if they are broken in repentance and cast themselves on him. David's example shows that their awareness of their own weakness makes them all the more likely to rest in God's strength.

## Psalm 19

### **1 A Psalm מזמור of David.**

Psalms 15 and 24 tell us that we need to obey God to enter his holy place. At the pinnacle of the chiasm, this Psalm tells how we know what it is that God requires, and illustrates David's desire to achieve that standard.

43 "Trust" here is not "take refuge" חסה, but the more general term בטה (see notes to Psalms 3-14). This is not David in flight, but in combat, the second story of Psalm 18.

44 Thirtle remarks, in reference to v. 2: "Hind stands for love (see Prov. 5:19), and Morning implies waiting; 'HEART'S DESIRE' interprets the title as a whole." But this is perhaps too nuanced.

## Psalms 15-24

The Psalm begins with God’s revelation in nature (1-6), then moves to his revelation in the law (7-9) and the appropriate response to it (10-14) (Figure 9, chart).

- In the 1-6, God is known only as “God.” In 7-14, he is Lord, the covenant God.
- The response in 10-14 is stimulated by the verbal revelation, not the creation. Creation can make us culpable for not honoring him, but cannot lead us to a right relation to him.

### 1-6, God’s revelation in nature

Moses warned Israel against worshipping the heavenly bodies (Deut 4:19). Yet this sin took the Israel into captivity (2 Kings 17:16), and Manasseh led Judah into the same sin (2 Kings 21:3).

The host of heaven are not deities in their own right, but point to God, in two ways. Verses 1-3 tell *what* they say, while 4b-6 tell *where* they say it, and v. 4 is a hinge between the two themes.

**The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.--**

Contrary to pagan thought, the creation is not a god in itself, but declares the glory of its creator.

Up to now in Psalms, David has spoken only of his own glory (כבוד Strong 3519, chart): 3:3; 4:2; 7:5; 8:5; 16:9, a metaphor for his soul or life:

Psa 7:5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take *it*; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay **mine honour כבודי** in the dust. Selah.

Now, for the first time, we read of “the glory of God.” But the two are not unrelated, for in the very first instance, David said,

Psa 3:3 But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; **my glory**, and the lifter up of mine head.

The next reference makes clear that David’s glory comes from God:

Psa 21:5 His **glory** *is* great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

All this prepares us for Psalm 24, where four times (vv. 7, 8, 9) we read of the “king of **glory**,” who is declared to be “the Lord יהוה of hosts.” David knows that his glory as king, like the glory of the heavenly host, is only secondary, reflecting the Lord as the true source of glory.

**2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.--**Day and night are pictured as a series of messengers, each passing on its message to the next, so that the truth might never be lost. “Uttereth” is literally, “gusheth forth.” The creation does not drop casual hints or obscure riddles about God. It shouts it boldly.

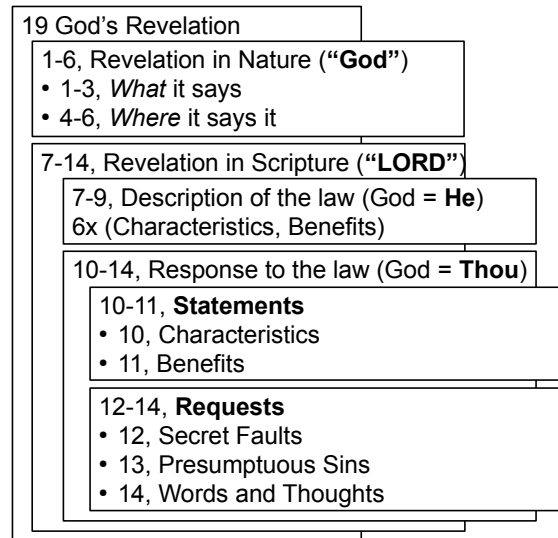


Figure 9: Structure of Psalm 19.  
Structural indices in **bold**

## Psalms 15-24

**3 There is no speech nor language [words דְּבָרִים], where their voice is not heard.**<sup>45</sup>--Once we recognize that the heavens speak, we are without excuse, for the nature of speech is to be heard. There is no such thing as silent speech or words.

Paul may have these verse in mind when he writes,

Rom 1:18 For the **wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are **without excuse**:

But note his conclusion. He does not claim that creation is sufficient to bring people to salvation, only that it leaves them without excuse. In every age, people try to silence the eloquent testimony of creation. In ancient days they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator (Rom 1:25), while in modern times they exercise their ingenuity to explain away a creator entirely.

Creation not just speaks of God's glory (vv. 1-3), but does so everywhere (4-6):

**4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**--The reference to "words" is a link back to the first three verses.

Paul quotes this verse later in Romans. Again, though, he implies a limitation to what creation alone can achieve.

First, he insists on the need for preaching in order to bring people to salvation (chart).

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Then he considers a possible objection. Is preaching really needed? Won't people figure it out on their own? Verse 18 responds to this possible objection.

Rom 10:18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Paul grants from the Psalm that the evidence is everywhere. But is that enough to save them? Paul counters by reminding his readers of the case of Israel.

Rom 10:19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are* no people, *and* by a foolish nation I will anger you. 20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

<sup>45</sup> Better, "whose voice is not heard," following Delitzsch. לֹא with the participle makes a negative assertion about the preceding noun, cf. 2 Sam 1:21; Hos 7:8. Recent versions (but see ESV) take the verse to deny the expressiveness of the heavens, but this contradicts the preceding and following cola. In that case, Torcszyner's notion of a riddle (HUCA 1924) is the best alternative, but it is strange that the answer comes before the riddle.

## Psalms 15-24

Israel had, not just creation, but the law of God, the subject of the second half of the Psalm, yet even they continued rebellious. So we must go and preach, to both Jew and Gentile.

**In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.**--The sun is not a law unto itself. It is under God's control, who hides it, as in a tent, during the night, and brings it forth glorious in the morning. Again, its glory, like David's, is derivative, controlled and limited by God. He can disclose it, but he can also hide it.

**6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.**--As 4a insists, this testimony of creation is universal.

### 7-14, God's Revelation in Scripture

Now David turns from nature to God's word. This section has two parts, separated by how he refers to the Lord (Figure 9): in the third person in vv. 7-9, but in the second in vv. 10-14.

#### 7-9, Described (Lord = he)

These verses define six terms for the law (see note) by their *characteristics* and their *benefits* (Table 9, chart). Most of these terms do not describe different parts of the law, but give different perspectives on the same divine revelation.

**7 The law תורה Strong 8451 of the LORD**--This word for God's revelation means "teaching," and encompasses all that God seeks to instruct his people.<sup>46</sup>

**is perfect**,--"Perfection" in the OT means "completeness." Nothing is missing. That fits with a name for the law that includes everything that God wants to teach us.

**converting the soul**:--David is probably not talking about salvation. Otherwise Paul would contradict him when he writes (chart),

Gal 3:21 if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

We have seen this expression "to turn the soul" in Ps 23:3,

Psa 23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He **restoreth my soul**: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

There, and here as well, the meaning is to refresh and strengthen our lives when we are fatigued and broken down. The Word of God has everything in it that we need for spiritual life and health.

Perspective	Characteristics	Benefits
Law (teaching)	Perfect, complete	Restores the soul
Testimony (of a witness)	Sure, trustworthy	Gives wisdom
Statutes (from oversight)	Right, straight	Rejoice the heart
Commandment (authority)	Pure	Enlighten the eyes
Fear	Clean, purified	Endures for ever
Judgments	True & Righteous	

*Table 9: Six Perspectives on God's Word*

<sup>46</sup> The only more comprehensive term is דְּבַר יְהוָה "word of the Lord," which appears 23x in Psalm 119, but isn't used here (perhaps because he has spoken of the revelation as דְּבָרִים in v. 3).

## Psalms 15-24

**the testimony עֵדוּת Strong 5715 of the LORD**--The word “testimony” or “witness” implies that the lawgiver is a friend or counselor, “bearing witness” to that of which he has sure knowledge.

**is sure**,--David calls it “sure” אָמֵן (Strong 539), that which is worthy of belief. This characteristic is specially suited to the testimony of a faithful witness, one who knows whereof he speaks.

**making wise the simple**.--The verb underlying “testimony” often means “warn, admonish,” and is thus appropriate for instructing those who might otherwise stumble into error.

**8 The statutes פְּקוּדֵי Strong 6490 of the LORD**--The verb underlying verb פָּקַד is often translated “visit.” The LXX often translates it with επισκεπτομαι, from which we get “bishop” or “overseer,” suggesting that it has to do with oversight. If their insight is valid, perhaps the emphasis here is on instruction based on close interaction and engagement between the one giving the instruction and the one receiving it.

**are right**,--“Right” יָשָׁר (Strong 3477) has the idea of being straight, not crooked. This certainly fits with the kind of instruction you’d expect from an overseer: it can’t be ambiguous, but needs to be straightforward and clear.

**rejoicing the heart**:--Again, the impact of the perspective is appropriate to the perspective itself. We are likely to chafe against instruction that seems impersonal and insensitive to our needs and conditions, but God’s statutes reflect his shepherd-like care of us, exactly suited to our needs, and if we truly love him, we will rejoice in such clear, relevant, and fitting direction.

**the commandment מצוּה Strong 4687 of the LORD**—This name comes from the verb “to command,” emphasizing the authority of one party over another.

**is pure**,--This word family describes ethical purity. Six out of 10 instances in Psalms appear in Psalms 15-24 (18:20, 24, 26; 24:4), always with this sense. Authority often leads to corruption, but God’s commandments are not compromised by any impurity.

**enlightening the eyes**.--This expression describes more than intellectual clarification. Note the only other instance of it in Psalms:<sup>47</sup>

Psa 13:3 **lighten mine eyes**, lest I sleep the *sleep of death*;

Because God’s command is not self-interested, it enables us to escape from danger.<sup>48</sup>

**9 The fear יִרְאָה Strong 3374 of the LORD**—Unlike the other five terms, “fear” is not a title for “law,”<sup>49</sup> but rather describes the attitude we ought to have toward the law. God grants us, not just his law, but an attitude that is receptive toward it.

**is clean**,--This word טָהוֹר (Strong 2889) and its cognates regularly describe the ritual purifications required by the law. This kind of cleanness is the state of someone who used not to be clean, but has gone through a process of cleansing. It describes silver or gold that has been refined to remove all impurity.

What does it mean for the fear of the Lord to be purified? Let’s consider the next phrase:

47 Ezra 9:8 has similar implications; the only other instance, Prov 29:13, is ambiguous in its meaning but the notion of life-giving teaching certainly fits (unlike other aids to life, God’s commandments are accessible to both rich and poor).

48 Solomon describes the same function for the commandment (Prov 6:20-24), describing it as “a lamp” (v. 23).

49 Even in 119:38



## Psalms 15-24

**enduring for ever:**--The idea that the fear of the Lord endures forever stands in contrast with a well-known verse in 1 John,

1Jo 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

How can David say that the fear of the Lord endures for ever, while John insists that perfect love casts out fear? Theologians back to Augustine<sup>50</sup> have distinguished two kinds of fear of God: the fear of his punishment, and the fear of displeasing him. The first is coupled with our love of sin, and is fearful that he will come too close to us, discover us, and punish us. The second reflects our love of him and is fearful that we will disappoint him and separate him from us. The first fear pushes God away; the second clings to him. Augustine notes on 1 John 4:18,<sup>51</sup>

It is one thing to fear God lest He cast thee into hell with the devil, and another thing to fear God lest He forsake thee. The fear by which thou fearest lest thou be cast into hell with the devil, is not yet chaste; for it comes not from the love of God, but from the fear of punishment: but when thou fearest God lest His presence forsake thee, thou embracest Him, thou longest to enjoy God Himself.

The fear that endures forever is purified from all love of self, and results solely from our complete love of God and dedication to him.

**the judgments משפּט Strong 4941 of the LORD**—This title may be the one that focuses on a specific kind of law. Some parts of the law, like the ten commandments, are absolute: thou shalt not kill; thou shalt love the Lord thy God. But others deal with specific situations. We have an excellent example of these in Exodus 21-22, which begin by calling these “judgments”:

Exo 21:1 Now these *are* the **judgments** which thou shalt set before them. 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.

The “If-Then” alternation goes on for two chapters. Judgments have the form “If X happens, then do Y.” They are called “case law” (or “casuistic law”), because they deal with specific cases.

The word “judgment” comes from the verb “to judge.” Some of these instructions may have originated with rulings that the Lord revealed to Moses and other leaders in response to specific situations. In other words, they are the appropriate judgments to deliver for specific situations.<sup>52</sup>

**are true and righteous altogether.**--Another distinction of this final perspective is that it has two descriptions, not a description and a consequence.

“True” is literally “truth,” as in John 17:17, “Thy word is truth.” Though a “judgment” may appear contextual, when it comes from God it becomes truth. This paradox lies behind the notion of Scripture. Most of the Bible was originally written for specific people facing specific problems. Galatia, Corinth, and Philippi all presented different challenges and needs, and Paul wrote to them to address those needs. He was rendering “judgments,” case decisions. Yet when the early church recognized these letters as Scripture, they realized that their content is

50 See Alford for references

51 Ninth Homily on the First Epistle of John (Schaff, NPNF1-07, p. 516; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf107.html>)

52 The counterpart, referring to absolute or “apodictic” law, may be חוק, which this Psalm does not use. Deut 5:31; 6:1 both use “the commandment” (מצוה, singular) to summarize “the ordinances and the judgments.”

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applicable not just to the people to whom they were originally written, but to other believers as well. When a judgment comes from the Lord, it is not just for the moment, but becomes part of the “all scripture” that is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16), not just in its original setting, but far beyond.

In addition, God’s judgments about specific cases are always righteous, consistent with his nature. Human judges may pervert judgment, but God never does.

### 10-14, Applied (Lord = thou)

Now David turns from talking about the Lord and his law, to speaking *to* the Lord about the impact the law has on him. We noted that each perspective is described in two ways: its *characteristics*, and its *benefits*. The next two verses summarize these facets.

**10 More to be desired *are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.***--He summarizes all the characteristics of God’s word by comparing them to the most precious and pleasant things he can imagine.

**11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and in keeping of them there is great reward.***--As the participles associated with each perspective show, they bring practical benefits—restoring the soul, giving wisdom, enlightening the eyes to save us from ruin.

It is one thing to recognize the value of God’s word, but another to appropriate it personally, something that David now does. He distinguishes two kinds of offense, and prays that God would guard him from both.

**12 Who can understand *his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.* 13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.***--The distinction between secret faults and presumptuous sins goes back to Numbers 14 (chart). Moses describes what to do

Num 15:22 if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the LORD hath spoken unto Moses,

The following instruction has two parts.

First, he considers the situation in which someone violates the law unknowingly—for example, by touching something that has been defiled by contact with a dead body, and only learning about it afterward. He prescribes the appropriate sacrifices:

Num 15:24 if *ought* be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation  
Num 15:27 if any soul sin through ignorance  
Num 15:29 Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance

Then he goes on to describe deliberate, rebellious sin:

Num 15:30 But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously, *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity *shall be* upon him.

No sacrifice is available for someone who deliberately violates God’s law.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Heb 10:26-27 echoes this principle in the NT.

## **Psalms 15-24**

**14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.**--Finally, David moves to the most challenging moral situation, speech and the thought that leads to it. He desires that not just his outward conduct, but his entire being, be conformed to God's word, but recognizes that he is unable to achieve this standard on his own, and asks God to enable him to meet it.

At the extremes of Psalms 15-24, we learned that conformity to the law is required to enter God's presence, conformity to God's law. Here at the center, David meditates on that law, and asks that God would grant him this conformity, so that he may enjoy the presence of the Lord that he so much desires.

**To the chief Musician**

## Psalms 15-24

### Notes

#### **Similarities across Psalms 15 and 24 and Isaiah 33**

Table 10 shows the degree to which the injunctions in these three passages correspond to one another.

#### **How long was the exile of the Ark?**

The total duration of the ark's exile (between its capture at the Battle of Aphek and David's restoration of it to Jerusalem) is uncertain, because of questions about the duration of Saul's reign, but Table 11 shows a plausible reconstruction amounting to 68 years. It is curious that this period is so similar to the duration of the Babylonian captivity.

#### **מכתם (Psalm 16)**

The meaning of this title is obscure. It occurs here and in Psalms 56-60, but is otherwise unknown in Hebrew. LXX translates it *στηλογραφια* "inscription," which would suggest derivation from *כתב* (compare the prayer of Hezekiah, called a *מכתב* in Isa 38:9, where LXX has however *προσευχη*

"prayer") or *חתם*. There is evidence for some confusion of *ת* and *ך* in Rabbinic Hebrew, and the matter deserves further investigation.<sup>54</sup> An Akkadian root means "to cover," and Thirtle suggests that these six Psalms are particularly personal. Sawyer (GUOS p. 33) says that the word appears

<sup>54</sup> Fernández, *Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*, p. 12 cites Genesis Rabah 49 for transcription of *αλεπισυδρα* as *סדרה הלף סדרה* and *Miqw 9.4* for *לכלוכי* "soilings of" from *להלוחי*. In addition, Greek *χ* is regularly transcribed as *ך*. See Figure 10.

Ps 15	Ps 24:4	Isa 33:15
2 He that walketh uprightly,	a He that hath clean hands,	
and worketh righteousness,		a He that walketh righteously,
and speaketh the truth in his heart.	and a pure heart;	b and speaketh uprightly;
3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue,		
nor doeth evil to his neighbour,		e that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil
nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.		
4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned;		c he that despiseth the gain of oppressions,
but he honoureth them that fear the LORD.		
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.	c nor sworn deceitfully.	
5 He that putteth not out his money to usury,		
nor taketh reward against the innocent.		d that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes,

Table 10: Similarities across Psalms 15 and 24 and Isaiah 33

Reference	Event	Duration
1 Sam 6:1	Ark with the Philistines	7 months
1 Sam 7:2	Period from return of Ark to Kiriath Jearim to anointing of Saul	20 years
Acts 13:21	Reign of Saul	40 years
2 Sam 5:5	Reign of David in Hebron	7 years 6 months
2 Sam 6:11	In the house of Obed Edom	3 months
<b>Total</b>		<b>68 years 4 months</b>

Table 11: The Exile of the Ark of the Covenant

## Psalms 15-24

in Talmudic Hebrew meaning

“document” and in Moden Hebrew as “epigram.”

Delitzsch has an excellent analysis, and concludes, “a poem containing pithy sayings ... some expressive sentence ... is brought prominently forward.”

Delitzsch’s position, along with the LXX translation, would

go well with the structure of Psalm 16 and its reliance on a summary first verse. This suggestion is weakened by the fact that Psalm 23 also has a summary first verse but is not termed a *מחמת*. We will see whether the initial verses (or perhaps final verses?) of other psalms that bear this title, 56-60, can be viewed as summaries.

### Psalm 16:3

פְּסַלְמֵי אֱשֶׁר־בְּאֶרֶץ הַמָּה וְאֲדִירֵי כָּל־חַפְצֵי־בָם: 16:3

Several features of the text make translation difficult, and often lead to suggested emendations. Perowne has the most detailed discussion I have seen.

**The construct state of אדירי** requires us to respect the Massoretic placement of the *athnach*. This is an instance of the construct governing a following clause, as in Gen 1:1; see Waltke’s grammar section 9.6. The has the right sense: “the excellent, in whom is all my delight.”

Delitzsch wants to move **the ו from אדירי** to the start of the verse, while others suggest deleting it. But as it stands, it must coordinate the excellent ones with the saints.

Thus far, the AV has it right: “to the saints that *are* in the earth, and *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.”

The most difficult issue is **the initial ל**. Here are some options:

- The takes it as parallel to על at the end of v. 2. “My goodness” (my own virtue) “doesn’t reach you; it only extends as far as the saints, ...” But I’m not sure what this means.
- Sometimes it is taken in the sense, “with respect to, as for.” In this case, there is a major break at the start of v. 3, and (unless we drop the ל with the ESV) we are sent to v. 4 for the completion of the thought, as in the NET Bible:

3 As for God's chosen people who are in the land, and the leading officials I admired so much— 4 their troubles multiply, they desire other gods. I will not pour out drink offerings of blood to their gods, nor will I make vows in the name of their gods.

4. There is clear evidence that *het* continued to receive a guttural pronunciation. Even in the amoraic era, the Greek word κλεψύδρα ‘bowl’ was transcribed as קְלִיפֵי סְדֵרָה (Genesis Rabbah 49), and in Miqw 9.4 *het* is confused with fricative *kaf*: לְקִלְוֵי ‘soilings of’ < לְקִלְוֵי.

5. In respect of the *bgdkpt* consonants, RH has clearly taken part in a general process of spirantization evident in Hebrew and Aramaic dialects of the period, and we find Greek *chi* regularly transcribed as *kaf*, for example הַפְּרִיָּא ‘prefecture’ (ἐπαρχία) and פּוֹלִימָרְכּוֹס ‘general’ (πολέμαρχος) in SNm 131.1 (H 170). But the interchange of *bet* and *pe* in, for example, קֶפֶן for BH גֶּבֶן ‘bald’ (Bekh 7.6) or לְהַפְּקִיעַ for לְהַבְּקִיעַ ‘to break up’ (Taa 2.9), shows that a plosive realization of these consonants was still maintained (this interchange is also attested in very early Hebrew sources; for example, Arad ostracon 24 reads וְהַבְּקִידִם for BH וְהַפְּקִידִם ‘and appoint them’). Spirantization of *bet* is evident in its interchange with *waw* or *waw-waw*, as in the case of יוֹנָה and יוֹנָה ‘Jabneh, Jamnia’ or אֲבִיר and אֲבִיר ‘air’.

Figure 10: Fernández, p. 12

## Psalms 15-24

But it seems harsh to introduce the notion of apostasy in high places here, particularly in a psalm of David; this would be much more appropriate later in Israel's history.

- With Delitzsch and Perowne, I prefer to understand the לָ as parallel to that in v. 2. David makes his confession that the Lord is his highest good not only to the Lord himself, but also to the community of saints in whom he delights.

So I translate the verses:

thou [my soul] hast said  
 unto the LORD,  
     Thou *art* my Lord:  
     my goodness does not surpass thee;  
 [and I also say this]  
     to the saints that *are* in the earth,  
     and *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.

### **Links between Psalms 16 and 17**

Not only does Psalm 17 correspond strongly to Psalm 22, but it is linked to Psalm 16 as well, so much so that Hengstenberg considers them composed together, for a single purpose:

David, intending to prepare a treasure of consolation and confidence for the sorely persecuted and oppressed from his own experience during the times of Saul, presented it in a whole, divided into two parts. Of the different subjects which come under consideration,—namely, confidence in the Lord, affording the sure hope of salvation; his own righteousness; and the unrighteousness of his enemies,—the first is handled in Ps. xvi., and the second and third in the Psalm before us.

Table 12 summarizes the links observed by Hengstenberg, and some others:

	Psalm 16	Psalm 17
Trust and God's right hand	1 in thee do I <b>put my trust</b> . 11 <b>at thy right hand</b> <i>there are</i> pleasures for evermore.	7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by <b>thy right hand</b> them which <b>put their trust in thee</b> from those that rise up <i>against them</i> .
Preserve שמר	1 <b>Preserve</b> me, O God:	8 <b>Keep</b> me as the apple of the eye,
Nighttime meditation on the Lord	7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me <b>in the night seasons</b> .	3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited <i>me in the night</i> ; thou hast tried me, <i>and</i> shalt find nothing;

*Table 12: Comparing Psalms 16 and 17*

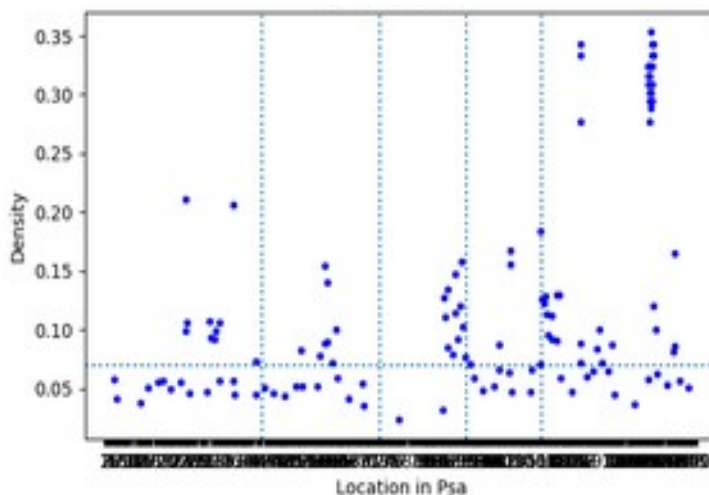
### **David as Sinner and Righteous**

In some of his psalms (e.g., 7, 17, 18, 26, 40), David pleads his personal righteousness. In others he is quite candid about his sin (32, 38, 51), and calls on God to help him identify secret sins (19:12-14; 139:23-24). At least in Psalm 17, other considerations (the parallel with Psalm 22) lead us to see this claim of righteousness as a Messianic reference. We will watch to see how often other claims of righteousness have Messianic overtones.

## Psalms 15-24

### **חסד** in Psalms

The root is more common in this book (130x) than in any other (254 instances in the whole Bible), but it is not evenly distributed (Figure 11). But it also does not correspond to the books. Note in particular how it is absent in most of Book 3, but surges at the end (once in Ps 77, twice in 85, 3x in 86, 1x in 88, then 7x in 89).



### **“Habitation” in Ex 15:2**

Modern scholars abandon the AV's interpretation of the *hapax* אָנִיָּהוּ as Hifil from the root נָהַג (attested later in v. 13), which goes back to Targum Onkelos, to follow the versions and the Bishop's Bible in deriving the verb from נָאָה, to beautify or glorify. But David might have this passage in view in framing his language in v. 3. Exod 15:1-2 are a prelude to the song, declaring Moses' intention. The statement that in praising God, Moses is preparing him a habitation, is a lovely poetic touch that we ought not lightly to abandon.

Figure 11: חסד in the Psalms

### **הלל** in the Psalms

Figure 12 shows the distribution. Significant peaks before the fifth book are Psa 22, Psa 56, Psa 63, Psa 75, and Psa 104-106.

This plot could be cleaned up. הלל sometimes has the meaning “be foolish” (perhaps in the sense of boastful?), and that is responsible for the peak at Psa 75:5 (ET 4). But perhaps that is intentional; this is the only peak in the Book of Devastation, when those who would praise the Lord seem foolish.

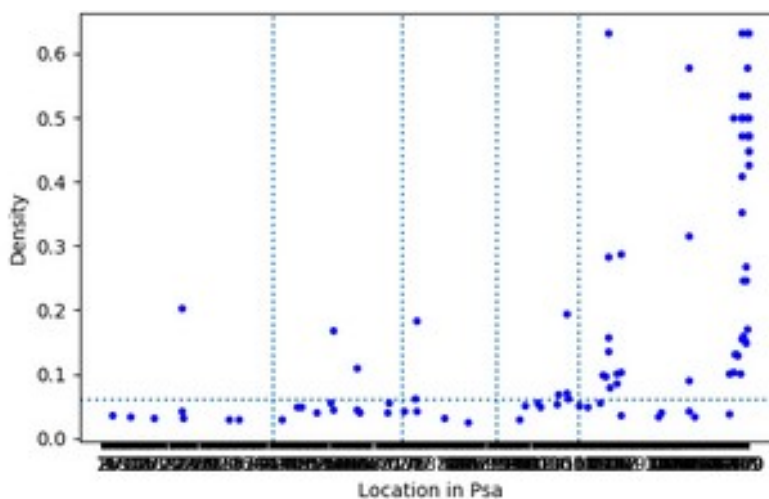


Figure 12: הלל in the Psalms

### **Psalm 18:2 and Earlier Psalms**

Maclaren describes 18:2 as a collection of what David learned during his earlier experiences.

The same exalted feeling is wonderfully set forth by the loving accumulation of Divine names which follow, as if he would heap together in one great pile all the rich experiences of that God, unnamed after all names, which he had garnered up in his distresses and deliverances. They tell so much as the poor vehicle of words can tell, what his Shepherd in

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the heavens had been to him. They are the treasures which he has brought back from his exile; and they most pathetically point to the songs of that time. He had called on God by these names when it was hard to believe in their reality, and now he repeats them all in his glad hour of fruition, for token that they who in their extremity trust in the name of the Lord will one day have the truth of faith transformed into truth of experience.

Table 13 summarizes the connections noted by Maclaren, and others as well. The only one that doesn't fit is "the horn of my salvation." The closest parallel is in the song of Hannah, but there, as elsewhere in the OT, the horn belongs to the person and emphasizes the strength God gives to that person. But in the first story, David is powerless. The point here is not what God enables him to do, but what God does for him.

The LORD <i>is</i> my rock סלע, and my fortress	31:3 For thou <i>art</i> my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. [71:3]	31:21 Blessed <i>be</i> the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. ~ Ziklag?
my deliverer פלט	31:1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: <b>deliver</b> me in thy righteousness.	
my strength צור,	31:2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock,	
in whom I will trust;	57:1 yea, in the shadow of thy wings <b>will I make my refuge</b> , until <i>these</i> calamities be overpast.	57:1 when he fled from Saul in the cave
my buckler מגן	Psa 7:10 My defence <i>is</i> of God, [my shield is upon God]	7:1 Cush the Benjamite
Horn of my salvation	1Sa 2:1 And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine <b>horn</b> is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy <b>salvation</b> . Luk 1:69 And hath raised up an <b>horn of salvation</b> for us in the house of his servant David;	
my high tower	59:9 for God <i>is</i> my defence. 59:16 for thou hast been <b>my defence</b> and refuge in the day of my trouble.	59:1 when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him

Table 13: Echoes of earlier Psalms in 18:2

### פניך in Psalms

21:5,7 (MT) are in the middle of a broad peak of references to God's face (the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> points in Figure 13), clearly a characteristic of Book 1. In Book 2 it is prominent only at the start, in Ps 44-45, but then peaks in Ps 80 in Book 3, the book of desolation, in the threefold petition, הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ הָאֵל פָּנֶיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה.

The longing after God's face is in striking contrast with the attitude of Adam and Eve:



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Gen 3:8 Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence פני of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

The hallmark of the sinner is a desire to avoid the face of God, while to the redeemed, his presence is the highest good.

### **Imperative of Hiphil** **ישע in Psalm**

This expression (found in this section in 20:9 and 22:21) is most common in book 1, the book of conflict, and lacking in books 3 and 4 (Figure 14).

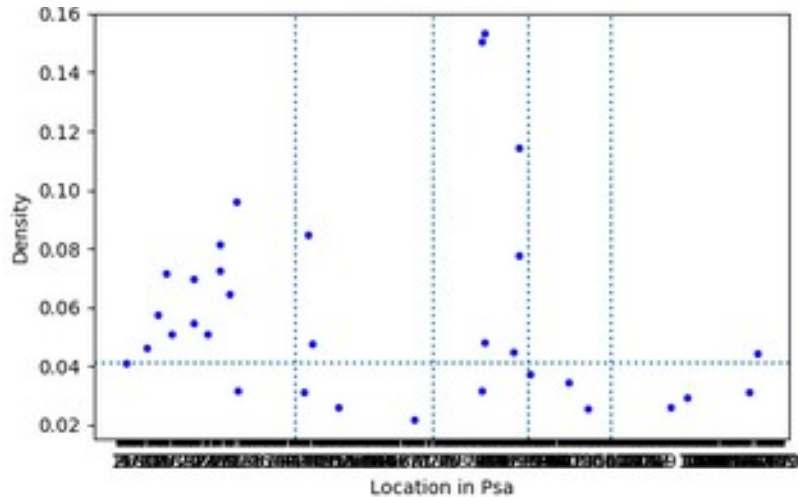


Figure 13: פניק in Psalms

### **Names for God's Law**

See Kidner on Ps 119, v.2, pp. 453ff for good discussion. Table 14 summarizes.

An additional word appears nowhere in Psalms, but is commonly governed by שמר "to keep, observe," which is applied to other words for law:

Gen 26:5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge משמרת Strong 4931, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

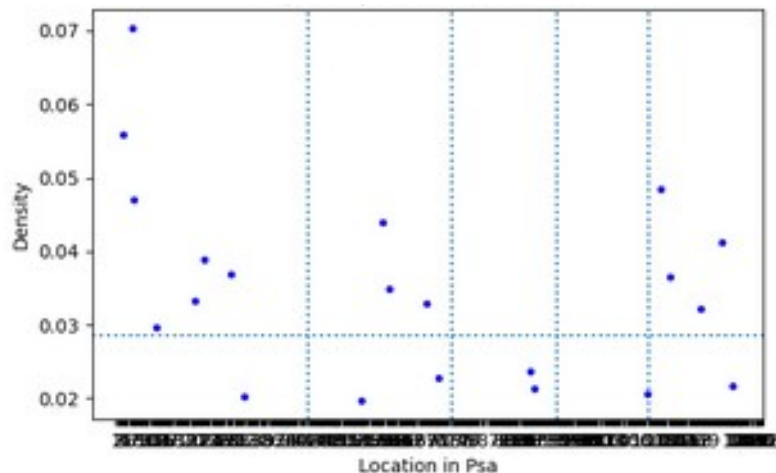


Figure 14: Hiphil Imperative of ישע in Psalms

This verb appears 469x, 72 of them (15%) in Psalms (only Deut, with 73, has more). In particular, it appears 21x in Ps 119 alone.

Notes from Tom Bear letter, 3/2/18

Law תורה Strong 8451 is a generic term that applies not only to legislation, but to teaching in general, derived from a verb meaning "to teach." Even more general is word דבר Strong 1697, which is the term translated "commandments" when the OT refers to "the ten commandments."

Judgment משפט Strong 4941 is usually agreed to be casuistic law, as opposed to apodictic law. Apodictic laws are absolute statements; the ten commandments are an ideal example.

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Casuistic or case law means laws that deal with specific situations, and usually take the form of "If someone does X, then you should do Y." The term is used in Exodus 21:1, and if you'll read the material that follows, you'll see that it takes exactly this form.

I don't have any particular insights to share yet around testimonies, ordinances, statutes, and commandments, but I'll be working on these...

Possible hints (but very etymological, and for that reason needing verification):

Term	# in Pss?	Plural in Pss?	# in Ps 19?	# in Ps 119?
law תורה Strong 8451	36	1 (105:45)	1	24
testimony עדות Strong 5715	34	27	1	23
statutes פקוד Strong 6490	24	24	1	21
commandment מצוה Strong 4687	26	24	1	22
fear יראה Strong 3374	8	0	1	1
judgments משפט Strong 4941	64	32	1	23
Ordinance חק Strong 2706	31	24		21
statute חקה Strong 2708	3	3		1
Word דבר Strong 1697	76	24		23
Promise אמרה Strong 565	25	1 (12:7)		19

*Table 14: Names for God's law in the Psalms*

Testimony עדות Strong 5715 is something to which one bears witness, and some commentators take this term to emphasize that the law is God's personal statement of what he wants. The earliest uses throughout Exodus describe what got put into the Ark, that is, the tables with the ten words. The word is most common in Psalms, 23x in Ps 119, and 11 others as well.

Ordinance חק Strong 2706 and statute חקה Strong 2708 come from a root meaning to engrave, and may originate with the custom of engraving laws on stone (not only the ten words, but also the law of Hammurabi). So you might think it emphasizes permanence, but that's just a guess. It's often paired with Judgment, and it has been suggested that Ordinance means apodictic law, in contrast with case law.

Charge or Precept פקוד Strong 6490 comes from a verb whose meaning has been extensively debated. The verb is often translated "visit." The LXX often translates it with επισκεπτομαι, suggesting that it has to do with oversight. If their insight is valid, perhaps the emphasis here is on instruction based on close interaction and engagement between the one giving the instruction and the one receiving it.

Commandment, when it's not used for one of these others, is usually מצוה Strong 4687, from a verb meaning "to command," thus emphasizing the authority behind the principle.

Note summary verses in the Pentateuch: These frequently use חוק, which Psalm 19 does not use, and avoid פקוד.

**Exod. 21:1** Now these *are* the judgments משפט which thou shalt set before them.--Introduces a series of case laws in ch. 21-22.

**Lev. 26:46** These *are* the statutes חוק and judgments משפט and laws תורה, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.--Appears to conclude the book, followed by an appendix on vows, which is then concluded:

## Psalms 15-24

**Lev. 27:34** These *are* the commandments מצוה, which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel in mount Sinai.

**Num. 36:13** These *are* the commandments מצוה and the judgments משפט, which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.--Appears to cover ch. 25-30, everything following the departure of Balaam.

**Deut. 6:1** Now these *are* the commandments מצוה, the statutes חוק, and the judgments משפט, which the LORD your God commanded צוה to teach you, that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it:--Better, “This is the commandment: the statutes and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you.” “Commandment” is in apposition to “statutes and judgments,” and summary of them. This is Moses’ response to the Lord’s instruction a few verses earlier, after repeating the Ten Commandments in ch. 5:

Deu 5:31 But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do *them* in the land which I give them to possess it. *Again, “the commandment: the statutes and the judgments.”*

**Deut. 12:1** These *are* the statutes חוק and judgments משפט, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.--Now he launches into the detailed exposition of the Ten Words. Recall the outline of Deuteronomy, from the Sermon on the Mount paper (Table 15). 6:1 and 12:1 are clearly summaries of the central body of the book.

Hortatory narrative	1-4	29-34
The Ten Words	5	12-26
Blessings and Curses	6-11	27-28

*Table 15: Structure of Deuteronomy*