

1

Types of Literature in the Old Testament

- **Law** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- **History** Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I-II Samuel, I-II Kings, I-II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah
- **Poetry** Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations
- **Wisdom** Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
- **Narrative** Ruth, Esther
- **Prophecy**
 - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum,
 - Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- **Apocalyptic** Daniel



2

Poetry.
Really?

 BASE



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But...poetry is *everywhere*

*Just a small town girl
Living in a lonely world
She took the midnight train
Going anywhere*

*Just a city boy
Born and raised in South Detroit
He took the midnight train
Going anywhere*

*A singer in a smoky room
A smell of wine and cheap perfume
For a smile they can share the night
It goes on and on and on and on*

*Strangers waiting
Up and down the boulevard
Their shadows searching in the night
Streetlights, people
Living just to find emotion
Hiding somewhere in the night*



4

Aspects of Poetry

- Verse and meter
- Evocative
- Symbolism
- Simile and metaphor
- Density
- Rhyme
- Memorable
- Music



*Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.*

*My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.*

*He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.*

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

—Robert Frost

5

Prayer and Poetry

Poetry is evocative, opens us to new spaces, and engages our imaginations

Poetry speaks emotionally, from the heart

Sacred poetry invites us to a place of meditation: *prayer*

Prayer is another way we encounter God



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Poetry in the Bible

- Psalms
- Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- Scattered throughout many other books
- Recognizable by indents in study Bibles



Luke 1:41-55 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be^a a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Mary's Song of Praise

46 And Mary^b said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
 48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
 Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
 and holy is his name.
 50 His mercy is for those who fear him
 from generation to generation.
 51 He has shown strength with his arm;
 he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
 and lifted up the lowly;
 53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
 and sent the rich away empty.
 54 He has helped his servant Israel,
 in remembrance of his mercy,
 55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
 to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

7

Who wrote the Psalms?

The 5 books of Psalms

- Introduction: Psalms 1-2
- Book I: Psalms 3-41
- Book II: Psalms 42-72
- Book III: Psalms 73-89
- Book IV: Psalms 90-106
- Book V: Psalms 107-150

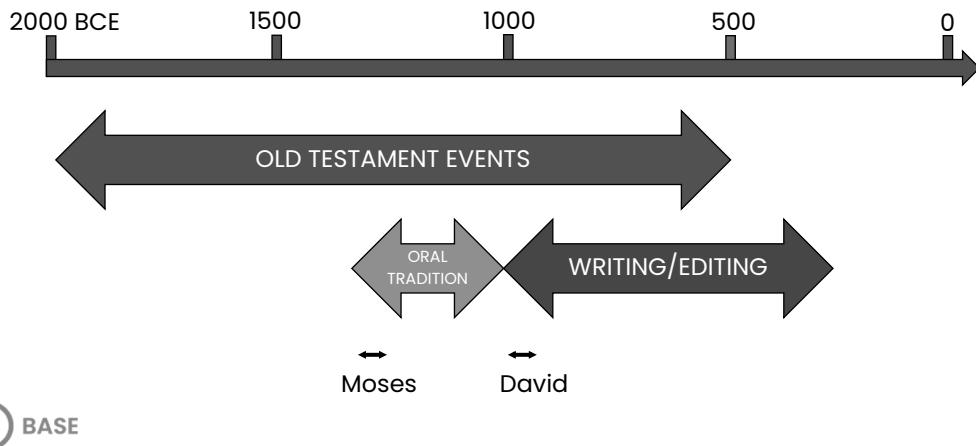
Traditionally, the entire Psalter is attributed to David, but other authors include Moses and Solomon.

Mostly David



8

When were the Psalms written?



9

Types of Psalms

There is no single classification system.
Many psalms are more than one type!

<http://www.crivoice.org/psalmtypes.html>



Types of Psalms Classifying the Psalms by Genre

Dennis Bratcher

Lament Psalms	
Community	12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89*, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129
Individual	3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27*, 28, 31, 36*, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52*, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89*, 120, 139, 141, 142
Specialized Lament Psalms	
Penitential	6, 32*, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143
Imprecatory	35, 69, 83, 88, 109, 137, 140
Thanksgiving (Todah) Psalms	
Community	65*, 67*, 75, 107, 124, 136*
Individual	18, 21, 30, 32*, 34, 40:1-11, 66:13-20, 92, 108*, 116, 118, 138
Specialized Thanksgiving (Todah) Psalms	
Salvation History	8*, 105-106, 135, 136
Songs of Trust	11, 16, 23, 27*, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131
Hymnic Psalms	
Hymn and Doxology	8*, 19:1-6, 33, 66:1-12, 67*, 95, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 114, 117, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
Liturgical Psalms (for Public Worship)	
Covenant Songs	50, 78, 81, 89*, 132
Royal / Enthronement	2, 18, 20, 21, 29, 45, 47, 72, 93, 95*, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 110, 144
Songs of Zion	46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122
Temple Liturgies	15, 24, 68*, 82, 95*, 115, 134
Community Psalms	
Wisdom Psalms	1*, 36*, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133
Torah Poems	1*, 19:7-14, 119

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Why were the Psalms written?

- Worship (hymnal)
- Teaching
- Remembrance
- Prayer
- Looking back, after the Exile

About 60 hymns in the UMC hymnal are based on Psalms.

The UMC hymnal has responsive readings for 100 Psalms.



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Laments

- Sadness and grief
- Illness, pain, and suffering
- Loneliness and despair
- Confusion

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?

² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
Psalm 22:1-2



12

Penitential

- Feeling sorry for hurting someone
- Prayers for forgiveness
- Calls to repent



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Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

Psalm 51:1-4

13

Imprecatory

- Cries of anguish
- Shouts of anger
- Protests against wrongs
- Pleas for revenge



 BASE

Appoint someone evil to oppose my enemy;
let an accuser stand at his right hand.
When he is tried, let him be found guilty,
and may his prayers condemn him.
May his days be few;
may another take his place of leadership.
May his children be fatherless
and his wife a widow.
May his children be wandering beggars;
may they be driven from their ruined homes.
May a creditor seize all he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor.
May no one extend kindness to him
or take pity on his fatherless children.
May his descendants be cut off,
their names blotted out from the next generation.
May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered
before the LORD;
may the sin of his mother never be blotted out.
May their sins always remain before the LORD,
that he may blot out their name from the earth.

Psalm 109:6-15

14

Hymns

- Praise and celebration!
- Singing and dancing!
- God is good!



 BASE

Praise the **LORD**.^[a]
 Praise God in his sanctuary;
 praise him in his mighty heavens.
² Praise him for his acts of power;
 praise him for his surpassing greatness.
³ Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
 praise him with the harp and lyre,
⁴ praise him with timbrel and dancing,
 praise him with the strings and pipe,
⁵ praise him with the clash of cymbals,
 praise him with resounding cymbals.
⁶ Let everything that has breath praise
 the **LORD**.
 Praise the **LORD**.
Psalm 150

15

Thanksgiving

- Celebrating what God has done
- Affirming trust and faith
- Love letters to God



 BASE

I will exalt you, **LORD**,
 for you lifted me out of the depths
 and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
² **LORD** my God, I called to you for help,
 and you healed me.
³ You, **LORD**, brought me up from the realm of the
 dead;
 you spared me from going down to the pit.
⁴ Sing the praises of the **LORD**, you his faithful
 people;
 praise his holy name.
⁵ For his anger lasts only a moment,
 but his favor lasts a lifetime;
 weeping may stay for the night,
 but rejoicing comes in the morning.
Psalm 30:1-5

16

Wisdom

- Instructions for living
- Prayers for guidance
- Dealing with the hard questions



 BASE

Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
 or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of
 water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers.
⁴ Not so the wicked!
 They are like chaff
 that the wind blows away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the
 judgment,
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the
 righteous,
 but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalm 1

17

Praying the Psalms

- Have you ever used a poem or song as part of a prayer?
- What type of psalm do you relate to most easily? Which seems the most foreign?
- How can you see yourself using the Psalms in your personal prayers?

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