

The Book of Psalms

The Psalter has been divided into five books: Book 1: Psalms 1 - 41; Book 2: Psalms 42 - 72; Book 3: Psalms 73 - 89; Book 4: Psalms 90 - 106; and Book 5: Psalms 107 - 150. Within these groupings are a number of sub-categories. Each ends with a doxology.

Authors: David: 73 - about half, mostly in Books 1 and 2, Moses 1, Solomon 2, the sons of Asaph 12, and by the sons of Korah 10, many psalms have no indication of authorship.

While the "five" books of the Psalter are not categorically arranged, we can take note of the following classifications, noting some overlap in them:

- **Prayers related to troubled circumstances and faith and trust** (about half of the Psalms) in particular - 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131
- **Laments** (about sixty, including: individual - 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 120; and corporate laments - 12, 44, 80, 94, 137. These have six elements: address, complaint, trust, deliverance, assurance and praise,
- **Psalms of Praise** (about forty incl. the **Hallels** - 136, 146-50)- these can be grouped as individual or corporate); Of God the Creator - 8, 19, 148; of God the Protector - 66, 100, 111, 114, 149; Lord of History - 33, 103, 113, 117, 145-147.
- **Psalms of the Righteous man** - 1, 15, 101, 112, 133
- **Royal Psalms** - 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, 144; **Enthronement** - 24, 29, 47, 93, 95-99
- **Penitential** - 32, 51
- **Historical** - 78, 81, 105, 106 - **Salvation History** 78, 105, 106, 135, 136
- **Alphabetic** (Acrostic, uses the Hebrew alphabet of 22 letters) - 119, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 145
- **Ascent** These songs were sung by those on pilgrimage up to Jerusalem - 120-134.
- **Thanksgiving** Individual - 18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 66, 92, 116, 118, 138; and Community - 65, 67, 75, 107, 124, 136. Their elements: Introduction, distress, appeal, deliverance, and testimony.
- **Celebration and Affirmation** - Covenant renewal - 50, 81; Davidic Covenant - 89, 132
- **Songs of Zion** (Jerusalem) - 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122
- **Messianic Psalms:** 2, 16, 99, 40, 45, 69, 110, 72, and 89 are Messianic, the N.T. also quotes 8, 4, 68, 102, 109 and 118, which have indirect Messianic references.
- **Wisdom Psalms** - 1, 19b, 32, 34, 37, 49, 78, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, 133 (Cf Prov 8)

For more on their organization see [Out of The Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today](#) by Bernard Anderson. Among the best commentaries on the Psalms are Calvin's [Commentary on Psalms](#) and Charles Spurgeon's [A Treasury of David](#).