

# The Movement and Message of the Hebrew Psalter

AN OVERVIEW ON WHAT IT MEANS TO READ  
THE BOOK OF PSALMS AS A BOOK

WEEK 3  
THE MOVEMENT OF BOOKS I AND II

## The Puzzling Psalter

- From here on out we are joining with Augustine:
  - “The sequence of the Psalms, which seems to me to contain the secret of a mighty mystery, has not yet been revealed to me.”  
(*Enarrationes* on Psalm 150)



## Concluding Last Week

- Last week we spent a lot of time building up the edges of our puzzle
- We concluded that:
  - Psalms 1-2 form the introduction to our book
    - ✦ These are both about the last days and the two ways
    - ✦ A crucial theological point: 2 Samuel 7.14 and Psalm 2.7
  - Psalms 146-150 form the conclusion
    - ✦ These reiterate the situation in Psalms 1-2, not ignoring the cries of the Psalmist, but also commanding his/their praise
    - ✦ Example: Psalm 145:18-21

## What is the significance?

- The chief lamenter in the Psalter is King-Prophet David, who was the one who received the promises in the first place
- Many of the laments are concerned with the apparent non-fulfillment of judgment against the wicked (1.6, 2.10-12)
- The psalms to come will take us on a journey to show us how to have great trust in the promises of God despite the world around us, and give us an avenue to complain to and praise God

## The Journey of the Psalter

- **Through the Valley of Vision (Books I-II)**
  - Enemies surround the King, and we hear his lament
  - Within the lament, we find confident hope in the future
- **Into the Thicket of Despair (Book III)**
  - The lowest point in the Psalter – Jerusalem is sacked, the Monarchy is uprooted, Israel is in exile
- **Signs of the Clearing (Book IV)**
  - The Lord continues to reign from Zion, and the hope for the future of Israel rests alone with God who can gather them in
- **Ascending the Mountain of the Lord (Book V)**
  - The people of God now ascend the mountain which the King has enabled them to ascend; and they do so with praise on their lips

## On the Journey for Yourself

- **What have you noticed so far in the Psalter?**
- **How can you relate?**
- **What connections have you seen between psalms?**

## Observations in Books 1-2

- One of the key words: “refuge” or “trust” (2.12)
  - Used to begin psalms
    - ✦ 7.1, “Yhwh my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers and deliver me.”
    - ✦ 16.1, “Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.”
    - ✦ See also: 11.1; 31.1; 46.1; 57.1; 71.1
  - Used within a psalm
    - ✦ 5.11, “Let all who take refuge in you rejoice!”
    - ✦ 17.7, “Display the wonders of your steadfast love, Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand”
    - ✦ See also: 14.6; 18.2, 30; 25.20; 31.19; 34.8-22; 36.7; 37.40; 61.3-4; 62.7-8; 64.10; 71.7
- The usage of ‘refuge’ suggests it as a key lesson for Books I-II – it speaks both about Yahweh and his people

## Observations in Books 1-2

- “Blessing” – From *sr* in 1.1 and 2.12 and *brk* in 3.8
  - The same *sr* found near end of Book 1 (32.1; 33.12; 34.8; 40.4; 41.1) and only once in Book 2 (65.4)
  - The other word for blessing (*brk*) is found much more often
    - ✦ Book I (3.8; 5.12; 10.3; 16.7; 18.46; 21.3; 24.5; 26.12; 28.6; 29.11; 31.21; 34.1; 37.22, 26; 41.13)
    - ✦ Book 2 (45.2; 49.18; 62.4; 63.4; 65.10; 66.8; 67.1; 68.19)
  - Importantly, Psalm 72 (15, 17, 18, 19)
- “Steadfast Love” (17.7; 18.50) from Hebrew *hsd* (חסד)
  - Its uses in Book 1 (5.7; 6.4; 13.5; 21.7; 23.6; 25.6; 26.3; 31.7; 32.10; 33.5; 36.5; 40.10)
  - Its uses in Book 2 (42.8; 44.26; 48.9; 51.1; 52.1; 57.3; 59.10, 16, 17; 61.7; 62.12; 63.3; 66.20; 69.13, 16)

## Following the King in Books 1-2

- **Key Questions**

- Which psalms are 'royal' psalms? Does a title referring to David make a psalm royal?
- It is significant that 'royal' psalms are near puzzle edges?
- Who is speaking? The king – sometimes? Always? Never?
- What does the royal theme have to do with us?

- **Key Psalms**

- 1-2 – Our introduction to the King
- 3-14 – Hearing the voice of the King
- 15-24, 26 – Only the King is qualified to ascend the holy hill
- 42-49 – The benefits of trusting in the King
- 72 – A prayer for the future King