# Commentary on Psalm 145

## Introduction

Psalm 145 announces itself with an unusual title: not the customary “psalm” (*mizmor*) but “praise” (*tehillah*). That single word tells you what the poem is for. It is not plea or complaint; it is sustained doxology—praise as practiced, learned, and taught. The poem is also an acrostic: each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. An acrostic in biblical poetry is not a parlor trick; it is a way of implying completeness, an A-to-Z of what can be said. Here that form becomes pedagogy. If praise is the art the community must keep alive, the alphabet scaffolds that art so it can be taught “generation to generation” (v. 4).

One letter is famously missing: nun (נ). The rabbis heard in that absence a dark echo—Amos 5:2’s “Fallen (naflah), no more to rise, is the virgin Israel”—and then pointed to the very next verse as the correction: “The LORD supports all who fall” (v. 14). The gap itself becomes instruction. Praise is honest enough to leave a space for collapse, and faithful enough to follow it immediately with a divine counterword.

The poem’s architecture is elegant and deliberate. It opens with two vows of lifelong praise (vv. 1–2), moves to the problem praise must solve—God’s greatness is “unsearchable” (v. 3)—and then offers the solution: testimony across time (vv. 4–7). At the center sits Israel’s creedal shorthand for God’s character—“gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abundant in kindness” (v. 8; the classic formula from Exodus 34:6)—followed by a striking expansion: “The LORD is good to all; his compassion is over all his works” (v. 9). From there the poem rises into royal language (vv. 10–13)—kingdom and dominion—and then, against ancient Near Eastern expectations, defines kingship by attentiveness to the vulnerable (vv. 14–16): upholding the fallen, feeding every creature. The poem concludes with a tight sequence on divine righteousness and nearness (vv. 17–20), and a final widening of the camera—from “my mouth” to “all flesh” (v. 21).

A few literary terms will help a modern reader hear the craft. Parallelism—the basic engine of Hebrew verse—sets two lines (poetic cola) to work in tandem: “A is so—and, what’s more, B.” The second line rarely repeats the first; it heightens it, specifies it, sometimes balances it with its complement. Inclusio—framing a poem by echoing its opening at its end—also does important work here. The psalm begins with “praise” (*tehillah*, v. 1) and ends with “my mouth shall speak the praise (*tehillat*) of the LORD” (v. 21). The “forever and ever” vow in the first line returns at the last. The whole is held in a liturgical bracket.

The Septuagint (LXX), the ancient Greek translation, preserves a short line after v. 13: “Faithful is the LORD in all his words and holy in all his works.” That sentence fits the psalm’s cadence and theology and appears in some later Hebrew witnesses. The Masoretic Text (MT), the standard Hebrew version, does not have it. Readers should at least notice how well that addition would round off the kingship stanza by tying sovereignty to reliability.

The poem’s lexicon is precise. “Unsearchable” (*ein cheqer*, v. 3), a phrase used elsewhere to mark human limits before divine wisdom (Job 5:9; 9:10; Isaiah 40:28; Proverbs 25:3), answers the question no pious person should duck: What do you say when you cannot take the measure of God? Psalm 145’s answer is not analysis but narration: you recount works, “mighty acts,” “wonders.” The verb for “pour forth” in v. 7 (*yabiu*) literally means to bubble up or gush (BDB), and elsewhere names the way days “pour out speech” in silent creation (Psalm 19:3) and how lips, wise or foolish, emit what fills them (Proverbs 15:2, 28). Memory, the psalm says, is artesian. When the reservoir of remembered goodness fills, speech must overflow.

The imagery is concrete: eyes looking in expectation (v. 15); a hand opening (v. 16). “Open hand” is a stock idiom of generosity in Deuteronomy (15:8, 11). Psalm 145 dares to apply the human obligation (“open your hand to the poor”) to God. That reversal is one reason the Talmud singled out this psalm: “Whoever recites Psalm 145 three times daily is assured a place in the world to come” (Berakhot 4b). The rabbis say it is not merely the acrostic that merits that honor; it is the line “You open your hand…,” along with the psalm’s training in regular praise.

There is polemic here, but it is gentle. Ancient Near Eastern hymns magnified a god’s power by listing conquests and favors to the king. Psalm 145 speaks royal language, even borrowing the conventional “kingdom forever” formula (v. 13 resonates with Ugaritic idioms). But its political theology is different. True sovereignty looks like this: stabilizing those who have crumpled, supplying food in season, being “near to all who call… in truth” (v. 18), and drawing a moral line that honors love and destroys entrenched wickedness (v. 20). The repeated “all” (*kol*) is the psalm’s drumbeat: all his works (v. 10), all who fall (v. 14), the eyes of all (v. 15), every living thing (v. 16), all his ways/works (v. 17), all who call (v. 18), all who love (v. 20), all flesh (v. 21). Praise is finally not a private feeling but an ecology; it binds the “I” to “all.”

To summarize the arc: Psalm 145 teaches that when faced with what you cannot fathom, you do not fall silent. You tell what you have seen, you pass it on, you bind it to the alphabet so your grandchildren can remember it, you learn the cadence of daily blessing, and you trust that this “I” will join “all flesh” in time. Praise, the psalm suggests, is a practiced courage that outlives us.

Definitions at a glance:

- Acrostic: each verse begins with successive letters of the alphabet; a device of completeness and pedagogy.

- Parallelism: paired lines in which the second advances or complements the first.

- Colon: a single line within a parallel pair.

- Inclusio: a repeated phrase or theme that frames a poem.

- MT/LXX: MT is the standard Hebrew text; LXX is the ancient Greek translation, sometimes preserving variant readings.

## Psalm 145

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| **1.** תְּהִלָּ֗ה לְדָ֫וִ֥ד אֲרוֹמִמְךָ֣ אֱלוֹקַ֣י הַמֶּ֑לֶךְ וַאֲבָרְכָ֥ה שִׁ֝מְךָ֗ לְעוֹלָ֥ם וָעֶֽד׃ | A song of praise. Of David. I will extol You, my God and king, and bless Your name forever and ever. |
| **2.** בְּכׇל־י֥וֹם אֲבָרְכֶ֑ךָּ וַאֲהַלְלָ֥ה שִׁ֝מְךָ֗ לְעוֹלָ֥ם וָעֶֽד׃ | Every day will I bless You and praise Your name forever and ever. |
| **3.** גָּ֘ד֤וֹל ה׳ וּמְהֻלָּ֣ל מְאֹ֑ד וְ֝לִגְדֻלָּת֗וֹ אֵ֣ין חֵֽקֶר׃ | Great is the LORD and much acclaimed; His greatness cannot be fathomed. |
| **4.** דּ֣וֹר לְ֭דוֹר יְשַׁבַּ֣ח מַעֲשֶׂ֑יךָ וּגְב֖וּרֹתֶ֣יךָ יַגִּֽידוּ׃ | One generation shall laud Your works to another and declare Your mighty acts. |
| **5.** הֲ֭דַר כְּב֣וֹד הוֹדֶ֑ךָ וְדִבְרֵ֖י נִפְלְאֹתֶ֣יךָ אָשִֽׂיחָה׃ | The glorious majesty of Your splendor and Your wondrous acts-a will I recite. |
| **6.** וֶעֱז֣וּז נֽוֹרְאֹתֶ֣יךָ יֹאמֵ֑רוּ (וגדלותיך) [וּגְדֻלָּתְךָ֥] אֲסַפְּרֶֽנָּה׃ | Men shall talk of the might of Your awesome deeds, and I will recount Your greatness. |
| **7.** זֵ֣כֶר רַב־טוּבְךָ֣ יַבִּ֑יעוּ וְצִדְקָתְךָ֥ יְרַנֵּֽנוּ׃ | They shall celebrate Your abundant goodness, and sing joyously of Your beneficence. |
| **8.** חַנּ֣וּן וְרַח֣וּם ה׳ אֶ֥רֶךְ אַ֝פַּ֗יִם וּגְדׇל־חָֽסֶד׃ | The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. |
| **9.** טוֹב־ה׳ לַכֹּ֑ל וְ֝רַחֲמָ֗יו עַל־כׇּל־מַעֲשָֽׂיו׃ | The LORD is good to all, and His mercy is upon all His works. |
| **10.** יוֹד֣וּךָ ה׳ כׇּל־מַעֲשֶׂ֑יךָ וַ֝חֲסִידֶ֗יךָ יְבָרְכֽוּכָה׃ | All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your faithful ones shall bless You. |
| **11.** כְּב֣וֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ֣ יֹאמֵ֑רוּ וּגְבוּרָתְךָ֥ יְדַבֵּֽרוּ׃ | They shall talk of the majesty of Your kingship, and speak of Your might, |
| **12.** לְהוֹדִ֤יעַ ׀ לִבְנֵ֣י הָ֭אָדָם גְּבוּרֹתָ֑יו וּ֝כְב֗וֹד הֲדַ֣ר מַלְכוּתֽוֹ׃ | to make His mighty acts known among men and the majestic glory of His kingship. |
| **13.** מַֽלְכוּתְךָ֗ מַלְכ֥וּת כׇּל־עֹלָמִ֑ים וּ֝מֶֽמְשַׁלְתְּךָ֗ בְּכׇל־דּ֥וֹר וָדֹֽר׃ | Your kingship is an eternal kingship; Your dominion is for all generations. |
| **14.** סוֹמֵ֣ךְ ה׳ לְכׇל־הַנֹּפְלִ֑ים וְ֝זוֹקֵ֗ף לְכׇל־הַכְּפוּפִֽים׃ | The LORD supports all who stumble, and makes all who are bent stand straight. |
| **15.** עֵֽינֵי־כֹ֭ל אֵלֶ֣יךָ יְשַׂבֵּ֑רוּ וְאַתָּ֤ה נֽוֹתֵן־לָהֶ֖ם אֶת־אׇכְלָ֣ם בְּעִתּֽוֹ׃ | The eyes of all look to You expectantly, and You give them their food when it is due. |
| **16.** פּוֹתֵ֥חַ אֶת־יָדֶ֑ךָ וּמַשְׂבִּ֖יעַ לְכׇל־חַ֣י רָצֽוֹן׃ | You give it openhandedly, feeding every creature to its heart’s content. |
| **17.** צַדִּ֣יק ה׳ בְּכׇל־דְּרָכָ֑יו וְ֝חָסִ֗יד בְּכׇל־מַעֲשָֽׂיו׃ | The LORD is beneficent in all His ways and faithful in all His works. |
| **18.** קָר֣וֹב ה׳ לְכׇל־קֹרְאָ֑יו לְכֹ֤ל אֲשֶׁ֖ר יִקְרָאֻ֣הוּ בֶאֱמֶֽת׃ | The LORD is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him with sincerity. |
| **19.** רְצוֹן־יְרֵאָ֥יו יַעֲשֶׂ֑ה וְֽאֶת־שַׁוְעָתָ֥ם יִ֝שְׁמַ֗ע וְיוֹשִׁיעֵֽם׃ | He fulfills the wishes of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and delivers them. |
| **20.** שׁוֹמֵ֣ר ה׳ אֶת־כׇּל־אֹהֲבָ֑יו וְאֵ֖ת כׇּל־הָרְשָׁעִ֣ים יַשְׁמִֽיד׃ | The LORD watches over all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy. |
| **21.** תְּהִלַּ֥ת ה׳ יְֽדַבֶּ֫ר־פִּ֥י וִיבָרֵ֣ךְ כׇּל־בָּ֭שָׂר שֵׁ֥ם קׇדְשׁ֗וֹ לְעוֹלָ֥ם וָעֶֽד׃ {פ} | My mouth shall utter the praise of the LORD, and all creatures shall bless His holy name forever and ever. |

## Verse-by-Verse Commentary

### Verse 1

“A praise of David” (*tehillah le-David*) is unique among the Davidic superscriptions; *tehillah* names the genre and the task. The opening verb, *aromimkha*—“I will exalt you”—comes from a root meaning to lift high. No one “lifts” God; the metaphor is ethical and liturgical. We raise God, in the only sense available to mortals, by saying what is fitting. The pairing “my God, the King” (*elohai hammelekh*) balances intimacy with sovereignty. The second half-line—“and I will bless your name forever and ever”—introduces a refrain that will ring at the poem’s end (v. 21). “Bless” (*barakh*) in this context is not the patriarch’s hand on a head but a human voice naming God as the source of good.  
  
Two craft notes matter. First, the verse establishes an inclusio: *tehillah* opens the psalm; “my mouth will speak the praise (*tehillat*) of the LORD” closes it (v. 21). That frame teaches what the poem is about and what it does. Second, the temporal scope (“forever and ever”) will be grounded by a daily practice in v. 2. Praise is not a mood; it is a regimen, one that stretches into the far horizon.  
  
Medieval readers already heard the philosophical tension in “exaltation”: Ibn Ezra notes we exalt God “by word and by the faithfulness of the heart,” not by adding a gram to divine weight. Malbim refines the distinction: God in God’s essence is beyond speech, yet God’s “name”—how God’s ways are made known—draws blessing. This verse already models the psalm’s method: personal voice (“my God”) aims at public truth (“the King”), and lofty resolve (“forever”) must be habituated in time (v. 2). The vow is simple and audacious: a single mouth pledges a lifetime to praise the one sovereign.  
  
Define “forever and ever”: Hebrew often stacks “forever” with “ever” (*le‘olam va‘ed*) for emphasis. Here the phrase is liturgical poetry, not a metaphysical proof. It commits the singer to the long practice of praise and anticipates the community that will carry that practice beyond a single life.

### Verse 2

“Every day I will bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever.” The verse pairs the temporal with the eternal. “Every day” (*bekhol-yom*) is the concrete counterweight to the sweeping “forever.” Radak, with characteristic economy, aligns them: daily blessing in this world, endless praise in the world to come. The psalm teaches that “forever” is stitched out of “every day.”  
  
The tradition noticed the discipline here. The Talmud (Berakhot 4b) urges reciting this psalm three times a day—not as incantation but as training. The community that blesses God every day learns to see daily gifts. Malbim adds a theological rationale: because God “renews daily the work of creation,” praise likewise must be renewed. The point is not novelty for its own sake. It is that daily life, viewed rightly, is saturated with repeatable reasons to bless.  
  
Note the pairing of verbs: *avarkhekha* (“I will bless you”) and *ahalellah* (“I will praise”). Hebrew uses “bless” for human speech to and about God (naming God as giver), and “praise” for celebrating God’s greatness and deeds. The two are not interchangeable. “Blessing” marks the giver’s generosity; “praise” magnifies the giver’s worth. Psalm 145 is careful with its words, and this verse quietly lays its pattern: habitual gratitude generates the confidence to speak of God in the largest terms.  
  
Technically, this is an example of parallelism’s “A and, what’s more, B”: the second colon does not merely repeat the first; it intensifies the time-scope and shifts the verb, moving from the concrete to the comprehensive. Practice anchors vision.

### Verse 3

“Great is the LORD and very much praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.” The line rises in two stages to a paradox. First, praise of God’s greatness; then, the confession that the greatness outruns investigation. The Hebrew *ein cheqer*—“there is no searching out”—is a phrase with a scriptural life of its own. It marks the limit of human inquiry before God’s ways (Job 5:9; 9:10), and in Isaiah 40:28 concludes the prophet’s hymn to the Creator’s inexhaustible wisdom: “His understanding is unsearchable.” Proverbs 25:3 wryly notes that kings’ hearts are similarly unfathomable—an analogy this psalm will revise by recasting kingship as moral clarity and care.  
  
The verse is the pivot the introduction promised: if God’s greatness cannot be measured, what can human speech do? Psalm 145 answers, not with silence, but with narrative and community (vv. 4–7). Medieval readers crystallize the point. Radak writes: a person cannot comprehend the divine greatness “by much investigation,” but one should praise “according to one’s understanding.” The psalm’s pedagogy begins here: knowledge of God arises less from penetrating essence than from remembering what God has done, passing it on, and allowing the testimony to accumulate.  
  
Literarily, the line is almost a miniature chiasm: greatness—praise—unsearchable greatness. It begins where one expects a hymn of praise to begin, and ends by setting the terms of that praise. It is no accident that the next line (v. 4) hands the task to generations. What no single mind can grasp, the long, faithful rehearsal of works can mediate.

### Verse 4

“One generation to another shall laud your works; they will declare your mighty acts.” The Hebrew *dor le-dor* (“generation to generation”) is rare (cf. Isaiah 34:10) and carries the psalm’s whole pedagogy. When investigation fails, witness takes over. *Yeshabbach*—“shall laud”—is not mere repetition; as Malbim notes, the root (*sh-b-ḥ*) suggests enhancing, making something appear more excellent. Every generation adds what it has learned to say. *Yagidu*—“they will declare”—is the verb for telling something new. The implication is not innovation for its own sake, but the conviction that the works of God, in nature and providence, will yield fresh articulations as attention deepens.  
  
Two features are worth noticing. First, the line shifts from the solitary “I” of vv. 1–2 to the plural “they.” Ruthless individualism has no place in this psalm. A living tradition passes praise along, not as a museum label but as shared speech. Second, the objects are “your works” and “your mighty acts.” This is the psalm’s core method: not metaphysical description but narrated deed. Israel knew this pattern already; the Torah itself is organized around memory and recital (“When your child asks… you shall say…”). Psalm 145 makes that pattern the essence of praise.  
  
The verse’s parallelism illustrates the “A is so, and what’s more, B” principle: the second colon does not echo the first; it moves from the general (“works”) to the elevated (“mighty acts”), a subtle staircase of astonishment. In a poem about kingship, “mighty acts” has a double resonance: God’s power in creation and history, and God’s countercultural power to sustain the lowly—an anticipation of v. 14.

### Verse 5

“On the glorious splendor of your majesty and the words of your wonders I will muse.” The triple cluster—*hadar kevod hodekha* (“splendor, glory, majesty”)—is an instance of poetic piling-on. If “majesty” feels too close to “glory,” that is the point. Hebrew poetry often intensifies by accumulation, and the rhetorical effect here is slow-motion awe. A brief term-of-art: this threefold expression is sometimes called a hendiatris, a trio of near-synonyms used to amplify one idea.  
  
The shift back to first person—*asikhah*, “I will muse/speak”—signals the psalmist’s role as contemplative interpreter. The verb *siach* can mean to meditate, to speak softly, to ruminate. The second phrase is striking: “the words of your wonders.” Wonders (*nifle’ot*) and words (*devarim*) belong together throughout Scripture. Wonders must be told; they are also, in a sense, how God “speaks” beyond speech. Ibn Ezra nicely fuses the two halves: others will declare the visible mighty acts, while the psalmist will reflect on both the splendor visible in nature and the less obvious “words” those wonders communicate.  
  
The verse complements v. 4’s intergenerational pedagogy. Praise requires both public declaration and private rumination. The pedagogy is double: teach your children to tell the story; train your inner life to attend. The one without the other becomes either hollow talk or silent piety.

### Verse 6

“And they shall say the might of your awesome deeds; and I will recount your greatness.” Two nouns do heavy lifting: *ezuz* (“might”), a strong word used sparingly in the Bible, and *nora’ot* (“awesome deeds”), from the root for fear and awe. Together they mark works that not only impress but startle. The plural speakers of the first colon (*yomeru*, “they will say”) are the community rehearsing what they have seen. The second colon returns to the “I,” promising interpretation: *asapperenah*—“I will recount”—a verb used for articulate narration.  
  
There is a small textual note here. Some medieval evidence wavers between “your greatnesses” (plural) and “your greatness” (singular). The Masoretic reading, “your greatness,” heightens the line’s contrast to the first colon: communal speech about awe-inducing deeds pairs with the solitary voice trying to narrate the underlying “greatness.” Ibn Ezra captures the pedagogy: most will recount visible wonders; a teacher’s task is to help them see the divine greatness such wonders disclose.  
  
The verse demonstrates a healthy division of labor in praise. Communities remember events; some are gifted to interpret them. Neither suffices alone. Awe needs explanation that does not dilute it; interpretation must not domesticate wonder. Psalm 145 holds them together.

### Verse 7

“They shall pour forth the remembrance of your abundant goodness, and they shall sing for joy of your righteousness.” The key verb is *yabiu*: to make bubble up, to gush. BDB glosses it “pour out,” used of springs and of speech (Psalm 19:3: “day to day pours forth speech”; Proverbs 15:2: “the tongue of the wise pours forth knowledge”; 15:28; Psalm 94:4). Psalm 145 presses the image: memory itself, saturated with “abundant goodness” (*rav-tuv*), becomes artesian speech. This is not manufactured eloquence; it is a release-valve.  
  
The pairing matters. “Goodness” (*tov*) here is God’s benevolent provision; “righteousness” (*tsedaqah*) is God’s moral fidelity. The first flows into grateful speech; the second into exultant song. The movement from goodness to righteousness prepares vv. 8–9, where the creed-like description of God’s character will anchor both.  
  
A small grammatical note: *rav-tuvkha* can be read as “the abundance of your goodness,” not simply “your great goodness.” Radak points out the noun-sense of *rav* here (“multitude”), which suits the image of overflow. Praise emerges here as an ecology of memory: what the community keeps recalling accumulates until it must be voiced. That is part of why daily recitation matters. One cannot pour out what one has failed to store up.

### Verse 8

“Gracious and compassionate is the LORD, slow to anger and great in kindness.” This line is Israel’s short creed, lifted from Exodus 34:6. In the Torah it follows the golden calf as God’s self-declaration to Moses. In Psalm 145 it stands at the theological center as the reason praise makes sense. The words are worth unpacking in plain speech. *ḥannun* (“gracious”) is favor freely given. *raḥum* (“compassionate”) evokes the womb’s tenderness; God’s care is visceral. *’erekh appayim* (“slow to anger”) is a bodily idiom—God’s “nose” is long; the flare of rage is delayed. *gedol-ḥesed* (“abundant in kindness”) names that steady covenantal love that does more than justice.  
  
What is new here is where the creed stands. Not in a repentance liturgy, but in a hymn of praise. The psalm claims that mercy is not an exception; it is God’s habit. The next verse universalizes the claim.  
  
The medievals hear the pastoral implications. Ibn Ezra distinguishes how grace helps those who cry out and compassion shields from stumbling. Malbim argues that even divine punishments serve the purposes of mercy. But this line’s main work in the psalm is to set a baseline: praise is not flattery; it answers to who God is.

### Verse 9

“Good is the LORD to all, and his compassion is over all his works.” The double “all” (*kol*) is the psalm’s signal of expansion. The covenant formula has become creation-wide. This is more than generosity toward Israel; it is a benediction on existence. *raḥamav al kol ma‘asav*—God’s compassions “over all his works”—casts compassion as a canopy. The mother-bird image isn’t far away.  
  
The universality raised questions for readers who prized Israel’s election. Ibn Ezra cuts cleanly: human kings can only be good to some; God alone is good to all. Malbim adds: God’s goodness extends even to the wicked, with the aim of bringing them to repentance. Meiri extends “all” rigorously: animals, plants, the structures of “nature” that preserve species—these, too, are under divine compassion. That universality is not a sentiment but a thesis about the world’s order.  
  
This verse sets up vv. 10–13’s two-tier response (all works; the faithful) and vv. 14–16’s definition of kingship. If God’s compassion extends over all his works, creation’s praise must, in some way, be total.

### Verse 10

“All your works shall praise you, LORD; and your faithful ones shall bless you.” The two halves answer to v. 9’s “all.” “All your works” is a broad phrase: the entire created order, animate and inanimate. The psalm does not imagine rocks with vocal cords; it uses the standard biblical shorthand wherein creatures “praise” by being what they were made to be. Radak spells out the implication: even beings without consciousness “praise” through the perfection of their formation and provision. Humans, seeing this, praise on their behalf.  
  
The second half narrows: *ḥasidim*—“your faithful ones,” those who practice steadfast devotion—“bless” you. Blessing, as in v. 1, is the human act of naming God’s bounty. Malbim notes that the faithful are not only recipients but conduits; their blessing is how divine goodness flows outward. The verse thus sketches a two-tier liturgy: a universal chorus of existence and a conscious community of gratitude.  
  
This line also transitions us to kingship language (vv. 11–13). The faithful will “say” and “speak” of God’s rule, not as courtiers fawning over a human monarch but as people who have learned to read the world as a theater of God’s care.

### Verse 11

“They shall speak of the glory of your kingship, and they shall tell of your might.” Here the poem adopts the vocabulary of royal ideology. *malkhut* (“kingship”), *kavod* (“glory”), and *gevurah* (“might”) are terms familiar from ancient Near Eastern hymns to Baal and other gods. But Psalm 145 will redefine them. “Glory” is not the trappings of a court; it is the radiance of acts that lift the fallen and feed the creatures (vv. 14–16). “Might” is not spectacle; it is the power to sustain and to judge rightly.  
  
The two verbs matter. *yomeru* (“they shall say”) suggests declaration; *yedabberu* (“they shall speak”) implies extended discourse. The faithful are not content with slogans. They make a case, they elaborate. This is the psalm’s way of insisting that praise is not mere chanting. It is the slow, patient naming of what is true about the world under God’s reign.  
  
Structurally, we are in the middle of the psalm’s “kingship” section (vv. 10–13). The lines build toward v. 13’s majestic formula, and then, in a stunning turn, to the monarch’s care for the bowed down (v. 14). The psalm means you to hold those together.

### Verse 12

“To make known to the sons of humanity his mighty acts, and the glorious splendor of his kingship.” The infinitive “to make known” (*lehodi‘a*) states the purpose of the faithful’s discourse. Praise has a missional edge. It is not cloistered piety; it is instruction aimed at “the sons of humanity.” The target is broader than “Israel”; the horizon is creation-wide (cf. v. 21’s “all flesh”).  
  
The fourfold pile-up—*gevurotav* (“his mighty acts”), *kavod* (“glory”), *hadar* (“splendor”), *malkhuto* (“his kingship”)—is deliberate, and repetitive on purpose. As in v. 5, the psalm is not embarrassed by intensification through near-synonym. The task is not to compress God into a single term but to surround the reality with words strong enough to bear it.  
  
This verse does something else subtle. It presses the faithful to become translators. If God’s works are visible and God’s kingship is not, it is the community’s task to interpret—to show how the one implies the other. The result is pedagogy: public praise that doubles as instruction for the world.

### Verse 13

“Your kingship is a kingship of all ages, and your dominion is in every generation.” The formula shares DNA with ancient royal hymns: think of a god’s or king’s reign proclaimed as perpetual. But Psalm 145 refuses the flattery. The plural “ages” (*olamim*) and the paired “generation and generation” (*dor va-dor*) create a double time-scale: cosmic eons and human time. “Dominion” (*memshalah*) is the word for rule exercised effectively, not merely titled kingship.  
  
The LXX adds a sentence after this verse: “Faithful is the LORD in all his words and holy in all his works.” Some Hebrew manuscripts later reflect a similar line. The addition fits the psalm’s argument: kingship entails reliability; holiness names God’s difference-in-goodness. Even without the line, v. 13 completes the royal stanza by concentrating sovereignty in YHWH and then—crucially—redefining it in v. 14.  
  
One last note: the tight pairing of “kingship” (*malkhut*) and “dominion” (*memshalah*) allows Malbim to draw a helpful distinction. *Malkhut* suggests legitimate rule, the governance set from of old; *memshalah* suggests active, even forceful, exercise. Psalm 145 claims both for God across all times—an assertion it will cash out by attending to the least.

### Verse 14

“The LORD supports all who fall, and raises up all who are bent down.” Here is the shock and the heart. Right after “kingship… dominion,” the psalm tells you what such kingship looks like. *Somekh* (“supports”) is the verb for holding up, undergirding; *zoqef* (“raises up/straightens”) is the opposite of “bowed down.” The double “all” (*le-khol*) is emphatic: a royal policy without favorites.  
  
This is also where the missing nun (נ) does its quiet work. The Talmud (Berakhot 4b) says David omitted nun because of the verse “Fallen, not to rise” (Amos 5:2), and then “supported” Israel by this line. Whether or not one accepts the midrash as history, it is wise theology. The poem makes room for collapse and then pledges divine counteraction.  
  
The verse is an ethical redefinition of power. Ancient kings demonstrated might by crushing enemies. Israel’s God demonstrates kingship by propping up those whose knees have buckled. Deuteronomy 33:27’s “everlasting arms” are a close cousin to this image; Leviticus 26:26’s “staff of bread” is a metaphor for what sustains life. Psalm 145 calls the sovereign the one who becomes a staff.

### Verse 15

“The eyes of all look to you expectantly, and you give them their food in its season.” *Einei kol* (“the eyes of all”) turns the whole created order into a congregation looking toward the source. The verb *sabar* in this form means to wait in hope, to look with expectation (cf. Psalm 104:27, a close parallel: “These all look to you to give them their food in its time”). The line dignifies creaturely need: it is not shameful to look, to expect. The rhythm of divine provision is “in season” (*be‘itto*), suggesting order, not caprice.  
  
Ibn Ezra’s image of the skilled physician is apt: God prescribes differently for different bodies and species. Radak adds the idea of the chain of causation; God gives through means—ecosystems and seasons—without ceasing to be the giver. Meiri makes the point explicit: even creatures without reflective minds “wait” according to their nature. The “eyes” of all creation look to God because there is, built into the world, an openness to the source.  
  
The verse’s parallelism is exact: expectant gaze answered by timely gift. It is the psalm’s pastoral counterpoint to royal majesty and prepares the most cherished line that follows.

### Verse 16

“You open your hand and satisfy every living thing with desire.” The image is beloved because it is simple. *Pote’ach et-yadekha*—an open hand—is a human gesture of generosity transposed to God. Deuteronomy uses the same idiom to command human charity: “open your hand” to the poor (15:8, 11). Psalm 145 reverses the direction: God’s open hand is the source and model of human open-handedness. This is one reason the Talmud (Berakhot 4b) singles out this verse as a hinge of the psalm’s daily recitation.  
  
Two small words invite attention. *Mashbi‘a* (“satisfy/fill”) is robust: the creatures are not merely kept alive but satisfied. And *ratzon* can mean “favor” or “desire.” Rashi hears “sustenance sufficient” (a benevolent adequacy). Ibn Ezra takes it as what suffices; Malbim strikingly personifies “desire” as the agent that “opens” the hand—at times of “favor” the hand opens widely. The two nearby uses of *ratzon* (here and at v. 19, “the desire of those who fear him”) are deliberate. God meets the basic “desire” of all creatures; God also answers the deeper desires of those in rightly ordered relationship.  
  
The verse’s poetry is tactile. The hand is opened, the creatures are fed. Sovereignty here looks like sustenance. In the context of a poem concerned with kingship, that is a radical claim.

### Verse 17

“Righteous is the LORD in all his ways, and faithful in all his works.” The doubled “in all” (*be-khol*) underlines total consistency. *Tsaddiq* names moral rightness; *hasid* (here best rendered “faithful” or “steadfastly kind”) names covenantal loyalty. The pairing takes up the verse 7 duo (goodness and righteousness) and gives it universal scope.  
  
This is also the psalm’s short reply to a perennial question. If God is righteous “in all his ways,” why is the world as it is? Medieval commentators refuse glib answers. Ibn Ezra suggests that God, like a wise physician, prescribes differently for different cases; what seems misallocated provision is in fact tailored wisdom. Malbim imagines the bookkeeping of this age and the age to come: partial payments here, fullness of justice later. The verse does not attempt theodicy; it resets a baseline. Praise is not denial; it is a commitment to read the world under the rubric of a God whose ways are, finally, right.  
  
Note also the careful distribution of terms: “ways” (customary modes of acting) and “works” (particular acts). The psalm claims consistency at both levels. That confidence underwrites the next verse’s assertion of divine nearness.

### Verse 18

“Near is the LORD to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.” The paradox is central: the transcendent King is near. Nearness here (*qarov*) is relational availability, not spatial closeness. The double “all” is qualified by “in truth” (*be’emet*): sincerity, integrity, the alignment of mouth and heart. This is prayer’s ethical condition.  
  
Ibn Ezra, characteristically practical, writes: if a human king is far, he cannot save those who call; God is always near—but not to those who test him, nor to those unfit for rescue. The note is not exclusionary; it is formative. *Emet* in Hebrew names firmness, reliability, truthfulness. The psalm urges a kind of prayer that is not manipulative or performative.  
  
The line’s parallelism is instructive: universality narrowed by moral specification. The psalm will not let us take refuge in generalities. Nearness is not indiscriminate; it is the response of a living God to living persons who call with whole hearts (compare Deuteronomy 4:29: “you will seek the LORD… and you will find him, if you search with all your heart and all your soul”).

### Verse 19

“The desire of those who fear him he does; he hears their cry and he saves them.” The three verbs (does; hears; saves) trace a tight chain from desire to deliverance. “Those who fear him” (*yere’av*) are not cringing; they are rightly awed, careful in relation to the holy. The sequence is psychologically exact: in ordinary times God fulfills their desires; in crises God hears their cries; and at the critical moment God delivers.  
  
The echo of *ratzon* (“desire”) from v. 16 is important. Every living thing receives satisfaction according to its *ratzon*—its basic need. Those who fear God also have their *ratzon* met at a deeper level—desires shaped by reverence. Malbim draws a useful distinction: those who serve from fear receive help when they cry; those who love (v. 20) are kept in a way that prevents some disasters from arriving at all.  
  
The verse also sketches what theologians would later call the “means” of nearness: God’s doing, hearing, saving. Nearness isn’t a warm glow; it is action matched to human condition.

### Verse 20

“The LORD guards all who love him, and all the wicked he will destroy.” The line turns the moral contrast sharp. *Shomer* (“guards”) is proactive protection; *yashmid* (“destroys”) is decisive judgment. The object on the first clause is “those who love him” (*ohavav*), a stronger term than “those who fear.” Praise has moved from awe to affection. Radak notes the priority: love without calculation, not fear of punishment, and a corresponding promise of protection.  
  
The second clause will jar modern ears. How can the God who is “good to all” (v. 9) destroy the wicked? The psalm refuses to flatten mercy into blithe permissiveness. Divine goodness includes moral seriousness. Ibn Ezra suggests a temporal resolution: God may allow trouble to come to those who fear him (and then deliver), but God guards those who love him so that many calamities do not arrive at all; the wicked, by contrast, face ultimate destruction. Radak hears an eschatological cadence: in the future God will annihilate wickedness so that it does not endure.  
  
The point, in context, is not to gloat. It is to insist that God’s kingship is not morally indifferent. A world in which the open hand feeds all cannot consent to a permanent reign of predation.

### Verse 21

“The praise of the LORD my mouth shall speak, and all flesh shall bless his holy name forever and ever.” The inclusio clicks shut. The psalm began with “praise” (*tehillah*) and ends with “the praise (*tehillat*) of the LORD.” It began with a single mouth’s vow; it ends with “all flesh”—a phrase broader than “all people”—blessing God’s holy name. The phrase “holy name” shifts the register: holiness names God’s distinct, blazing goodness, the “otherness” that makes blessing appropriate and praise truthful.  
  
The telescoping from “my mouth” to “all flesh” is the psalm’s whole pedagogy in miniature. Praise begins in a disciplined “I,” becomes the speech of “they” (vv. 4–7), learns to speak publicly of kingship and care (vv. 10–16), and finally anticipates a cosmic choir (compare Isaiah 66:23: “all flesh shall come to worship”). Medieval readers hear messianic hope in that cadence. Meiri cites Zephaniah 3:9 (“a pure speech for all peoples”) and Isaiah’s vision as the final horizon.  
  
One last craft note: the final “forever and ever” returns from v. 1. The psalm has trained us in daily praise (v. 2), set bounds around speech (v. 3), taught us to pass it on (v. 4), and to name God’s character and works (vv. 8–9, 14–16). The result is not just a well-spoken “I” but a hoped-for “all.” This is praise as a civic virtue and a cosmic vocation.

## Methodological & Bibliographical Summary

### Research & Data Inputs

**Psalm Verses Analyzed**: 21

**LXX (Septuagint) Texts Reviewed**: 21

**Phonetic Transcriptions Generated**: 21

**Ugaritic Parallels Reviewed**: 1

**Lexicon Entries (BDB/Klein) Reviewed**: 23

**Traditional Commentaries Reviewed**: 111 (Ibn Ezra (21); Malbim (20); Meiri (20); Metzudat David (17); Radak (20); Rashi (6); Torah Temimah (7))

**Concordance Entries Reviewed**: 9

**Figurative Language Instances Reviewed**: 176

**Master Editor Prompt Size**: 235,017 characters

### Models Used

**Structural Analysis (Macro)**: claude-sonnet-4-20250514

**Verse Discovery (Micro)**: claude-sonnet-4-20250514

**Commentary Synthesis**: claude-sonnet-4-20250514

**Editorial Review**: gpt-5

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