# Commentary on Psalm 145

## Introduction

Alphabet psalms promise a kind of completeness: all the letters, all the praise. Psalm 145 comes as close as Hebrew can get to writing love to God from A to Z. It is the only psalm whose very title is “A Praise of David” (*tehillah le-David*). That title matters. The poem not only praises; it reflects on what praise is, who does it, and how far it reaches—from “*my* God the King” to “*all* flesh.”

Two features of its architecture shape the experience. First, the poem is an acrostic: each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Second, it is an inclusio (a frame): the opening pledge to bless God “forever and ever” returns at the end, but now widened to include all humanity. An acrostic is more than a parlor trick. In biblical poetry the alphabet can signal scope—the whole range of language is mustered to say what cannot be fully said. At the same time, Psalm 145 famously omits the nun-line between verses 13 and 14 in the Masoretic Text (MT, the standard Hebrew text). Ancient interpreters turned the absence itself into a moral: Rashi links it to Israel’s “falling” (Amos 5:2), which the next line counters—“The LORD supports all who fall.” The Greek Septuagint (LXX, a pre-Christian translation of the Hebrew Bible) preserves an extra line after v. 13: “The LORD is faithful in all his words, and kind in all his works.” Whether the nun-verse dropped out by accident or design, the poetic logic remains suggestive: an alphabet almost complete, and then a life-line—support for the falling—right where a letter is missing.

Psalm 145 also turns an ancient royal idiom. In the Ancient Near East (ANE—a term for the cultures of the biblical world: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Canaan), “eternal kingship” is stock language. Verses 11–13 recite the genre’s pride: majesty, might, a dominion for all generations. In Ugaritic poetry (from ancient Syria), similar formulas celebrate Baal’s unending rule. Our poet borrows the idiom of cosmic sovereignty and then redefines its content. The divine King here rules not by extraction but by care: supporting the falling, feeding every creature, drawing near to those who call “in truth.” The pivot is vv. 8–9, a capsule creed that echoes Exodus 34:6—“gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.” The psalm’s theological center of gravity is not power but character: generosity is the mode of rule.

Watch how the psalm widens. It begins with an “I”: “I will extol you… I will bless your name.” Then a “we”: “One generation shall laud your works to another.” Then “all”: the poem is saturated with *kol* (“all”)—not seven times, as is sometimes said, but seventeen in the MT (vv. 2, 9[2x], 10, 13[2x], 14[2x], 15, 16, 17[2x], 18[2x], 20[2x], 21). The word becomes a drumbeat. All days; all works; all who fall; all living; all ways and works; all who call; all who love; all the wicked; all flesh. The repetition (“anaphora,” the rhetorical recurrence of a key word) is not filler; it is an argument. The scope of divine care is unrestricted, and so must be the scope of praise.

The imagery is strikingly un-royal. Subjects do not peer into a palace kitchen; yet here, “the eyes of all look to you” for food on time (v. 15). A royal hand would typically close around spoils; here, “you open your hand” and satisfy “every living thing” (v. 16). These images are deeply biblical. “Pouring forth” speech (v. 7) echoes Psalm 19:3: “Day to day pours forth speech.” The “eyes” lifted in dependence recall Psalm 123:2, with servants watching the master’s hand. The “open hand” picks up the Torah’s ethics: “you must open your hand” to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:8, 11). Psalm 145 transposes Israel’s social ethic to the register of theology: what the Law asks of people becomes, at scale, what God does for all creatures.

If v. 9—“The LORD is good to all”—seems to promise indiscriminate grace, vv. 18–20 restore moral gravity. The King draws near “to all who call on him in truth” (v. 18), fulfills “the desire of those who fear him” (v. 19), “guards all who love him,” and “destroys all the wicked” (v. 20). This is not whiplash. Divine universality is not moral neutrality. The psalm’s love of *kol* holds together two claims: God’s care encompasses all creation; God’s intimacy and protection are shaped by truth, reverence, and love. The final verse returns to the “I,” but now the solo line has become a cue: “My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh shall bless his holy name forever and ever.” In rabbinic tradition (b. Berakhot 4b), reciting this psalm three times daily promises a share in the world to come—because it is alphabetic “almost to the end,” and because it contains the open hand. In other words, its form and its heart are of a piece.

Two terms for readers. A “colon” is a single line of Hebrew verse; many biblical lines come in paired cola whose relationship—restatement, contrast, or completion—creates meaning (biblical parallelism). An “inclusio” is a literary frame: the same phrase at beginning and end that encloses the whole and throws its center into relief. Psalm 145 contains both. It is also a studied reimagining of royal language whose central insight is simple enough to memorize and demanding enough to live by: the true King’s rule is generous, and those who love him imitate that open hand.

## 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”: this is the only psalm whose superscription is precisely *tehillah* (“praise”). The opening line sets the theological tension the poem will explore: “I will exalt you, my God, the King” (*’aromimkha ’elohai hammelekh*). The intimacy of “my God” meets the universality of “the King.” The verb *’aromimkha* (“I will exalt you”) is a strong pledge: a cohortative form that voices volition, not vague intention.  
  
Sound matters at the outset. The provided phonetic line—*tə-hil-lāh lə-dhā-widh 'a-rō-mim-khā 'e-lō-hay ham-me-lekh*—is liquid with l-sounds and long vowels, a flowing cadence that befits praise. The verse also sets the temporal frame: “forever and ever” (*le‘olam wa‘ed*) here and in v. 2 creates an inclusio within the larger inclusio of the psalm.  
  
Medieval readers already heard the politics: Malbim contrasts the hidden grandeur signaled by *’aromimkha* with the “name” that is blessed when God’s governance becomes visible in the world. The opening “I” is important; the psalm will recruit generations (v. 4) and, eventually, “all flesh” (v. 21), but it starts, as praise must, in a single mouth.  
  
Define: cohortative is a Hebrew verb form used to express firm intention in the first person (“I will…” with resolve).

### Verse 2

“Every day” (*bekhol-yom*) bridges eternity and habit. The psalmist’s “forever” has a daily schedule. The parallel cola—“I will bless… I will praise”—do more than repeat. Blessing (*barakh*) names God as the source of life; praising (*halal*) is public celebration. The verse asserts a rhythm: the eternal vow (v. 1) is kept one day at a time.  
  
Radak hears two horizons: blessing in “this world,” praising “forever and ever” as an eschatological hint. The poem is not coy about time: it is filled with *kol* (“all”), including *bekhol* (“in every” day, way, work, generation). Here “every day” is the first beat of *kol*.

### Verse 3

The first theological statement leaves praise behind and speaks of the One praised: “Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised” (*gadol YHWH u-mehullal me’od*). The participle *mehullal* (“praised”) acknowledges a fact rather than a wish; God is inherently praise-worthy. But there is a warning: “Of his greatness there is no searching” (*ein cheqer*). The phrase is rare, appearing in Job (5:9; 9:10; 36:26) and Isaiah 40:28. The point is epistemological and salutary: the poem proceeds, but it knows its own limits.  
  
The move from “I will bless” (vv. 1–2) to “great is the LORD” (v. 3) is characteristic of Hebrew verse’s parallelism, the “A is so, and what’s more, B” dynamic: the pledge of praise yields to a rationale. Ibn Ezra makes the monarchic comparison explicit: human grandeur begins and ends; divine greatness does not.  
  
Define: parallelism is the poetic pairing of lines (cola) in which the second confirms, sharpens, or completes the first.

### Verse 4

“Generation to generation” (*dor le-dor*) introduces the poem’s pedagogy. The verbs are durative (“shall praise,” “shall declare”): the ongoing work of intergenerational testimony. *Ma‘asekha* (“your works”) and *gevurotekha* (“your mighty acts”) are a crucial pair in this psalm: “works” can be creation and providence; “mighty acts” are interventions, the episodes of rescue or judgment by which kingship is known in history.  
  
Radak’s pastoral note is memorable: because lives are short, praise becomes a relay. The departing generation tells the next what it has seen, and the next adds its own sightings. Malbim goes further: each generation discovers aspects the previous missed; praise advances. The acrostic structure itself, moving letter by letter, enacts this steady handoff.

### Verse 5

“Hadar kevod hodekha”—“the splendor of the glory of your majesty.” The poet stacks three near-synonyms not because he has run out of words but because a single term will not do. *Hadar* hints at beauty; *kavod* literally “weight,” dignity that has substance; *hod* royal bearing. The pileup is the point: a merism of majesty within a single line.  
  
“I will meditate/recite” (*’asikhah*) returns to the “I.” The verb is used both for lament and for reflective speech (cf. Psalm 119:15, 27; Job 7:11), which helps explain the psalm’s tone: praise is not gush; it is considered, rehearsed. “Your wonders” (*nifle’otekha*) are not only events; they become “words” (*divrei*) worth pondering. The poet does not simply witness; he does the work of turning sight into speech.  
  
Define: merism is a figure that expresses a whole by naming its parts (here, an accumulation that gestures toward total majesty).

### Verse 6

*Ezuz* (“might”) is a rare noun; *nore’otekha* (“your awesome deeds”) is terrifying in the best biblical sense—Sinai language (Exod 34:10; Deut 10:21). There is a subtle pronoun dance: “they shall say” of the awesome deeds; “I will recount” your greatness. The psalm alternates congregational and individual voices. *Asaprennah* (“I will recount carefully”) hints at enumeration; this is precise re-telling.  
  
Medievals saw a difference of motive. Many talk about God’s *nora’* acts out of fear; the psalmist speaks of God’s *gedulah* (greatness) out of love, reading the terrors as ultimately rooted in goodness. The ketiv/qere note on “your greatness” (written as if plural, read as singular) fits the theme: multiple manifestations, one greatness.

### Verse 7

“Pour forth” (*yabbi‘u*) is a vivid verb used for bubbling springs and for speech that cannot be contained. The figurative pattern is robust across Scripture: “day to day pours forth speech” (Psalm 19:3); lips “pour forth praise” (Psalm 119:171); in the negative, “the mouths of the wicked pour out evil” (Prov 15:28). Our verse leans to the good: the memory (*zekher*) of God’s “abundant goodness” (*rav-tuvkha*) overflows.  
  
The second colon shifts to music: “they shall sing joyously” (*yerannenu*) of your righteousness. The movement is instructive: goodness remembered becomes speech that flows; righteousness recognized becomes song. Radak notes that *rav* here functions as a substantive (“the greatness of your goodness”), not a mere adjective—a way of saying that goodness itself has heft.

### Verse 8

This is the creedal hinge: “Gracious and compassionate is the LORD, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” The line quotes the divine self-declaration in Exodus 34:6, the most-cited theological sentence in the Hebrew Bible. Psalm 145 preserves the structure and slightly varies the diction in some traditions (many MTs read *rav ḥesed*; some manuscripts and the line as given render *gadol ḥesed*, “great in kindness”), but the effect is the same: character before deed.  
  
*Hannun* is unmerited favor; *raḥum* is compassion with a womb’s etymology (*reḥem*), maternal in tone; *’erekh appayim* literally “long of nostrils,” a physical image for patience (slow to flare). The psalmist is not improvising theology; he is choosing where to place it—in the middle—and what to do with it—expand it to “all” (v. 9).  
  
Define: MT = Masoretic Text (standard Hebrew), LXX = Septuagint (Greek translation). The “divine character formula” is shorthand for Exod 34:6–7 as echoed throughout Scripture (e.g., Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 111:4).

### Verse 9

“The LORD is good to all; his mercies are over all his works.” The drumbeat of *kol* sounds twice. “All” is not hedged here; the second line specifies “all his works,” i.e., all creatures. Meiri presses the point: providence extends to animals and even to plants, in the regularities of nature that preserve species.  
  
This is where ANE royal idiom quietly breaks. Kings were good to allies, harsh to enemies. The divine King is good to all, including those currently estranged (which does not eliminate judgment; see v. 20). If v. 8 is creed, v. 9 is claim: compassion is not a tribal benefit but a cosmological reality.

### Verse 10

“All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD; your faithful ones shall bless you.” The verbs matter: *yodukha* (give thanks/acknowledge) versus *yevarakhukha* (bless). Creation acknowledges; the *ḥasidim*—those who practice covenant loyalty—actively bless. Radak explains the asymmetry: non-human creatures “praise” God through their very being, but it is humans, attending to creation’s order and gift, who articulate the thanks—indeed, “as if” all creatures spoke through them.  
  
The verse also picks up the psalm’s ethical thread. In Torah, to “bless” is to transmit good; here, those who live *ḥesed* (covenant kindness) respond in kind to the God whose governance is generous. The line is not a hierarchy of worth but a layering of praise: natural testimony and conscious blessing.

### Verse 11

“Majesty of your kingship” (*kevod malkhutekha*) and “your might” (*gevuratkha*) bring us into royal diction. The verbs—“they will say,” “they will speak”—are public. Malbim helpfully distinguishes: *malkhut* can denote the regular order of providence (the “laws” of the King’s governance), while *gevurah* names those interventions that upend the expected (“miracles”). The psalm will speak of both to “the sons of Adam” (v. 12).  
  
The measured rhythm of the line—*kə-vōdh mal-khūth-khā yō'-mē-rū // ūgh-vū-rā-thə-khā yə-dha-bē-rū*—is stately; one can almost hear liturgical proclamation.

### Verse 12

“Make known to the sons of Adam” (*lehodia livnei ha’adam*). The shift to third person (“his mighty acts,” “his kingship”) suggests the singer speaking about God to others. This is praise as instruction. The vocabulary piles up again: “mighty acts” (*gevurotav*), “glorious splendor” (*kevod hadar*), “kingship” (*malkhuto*). The aim is not to explain God in himself (the psalm has already insisted on the inscrutable, v. 3) but to make known what can be known: actions and governance that meet human beings in history and in nature.  
  
The phrase *benei ha’adam* is maximally broad. This is the psalm’s missionary impulse—not proselytizing so much as witness: those who see are obliged to tell.

### Verse 13

“Your kingship is a kingship for all ages; your dominion is in every generation.” The formula borrows ANE royal idiom—“for all ages,” “for every generation”—and restates it for Israel’s God. The nuance between *malkhut* (legitimate rule) and *memshalah* (exercised dominion) likely intends both institution and action.  
  
The famous textual note: the MT acrostic lacks the nun-line after v. 13; the LXX supplies, “The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.” Either way, the turn to v. 14—“The LORD supports all who fall”—feels ordained, a hinge between cosmic rule and personal care. Rashi reads the gap through Amos 5:2 (“has fallen, virgin Israel”), then hears v. 14 as the Spirit’s response. Theologically, whether or not the nun-line stands between 13 and 14, the poem’s structure holds: the King’s faithfulness, then his lifting hand.  
  
Define: LXX = Septuagint; its occasional differences from the MT can reflect a distinct early Hebrew Vorlage (underlying text) or interpretive expansion.

### Verse 14

“Supports” (*somekh*) and “raises up” (*zoqef*) are tactile verbs. The beneficiaries are “all who fall” (*lekhol hanoflim*) and “all who are bent” (*lekhol hakeshufim*—MT: *hakkefufim*), encompassing both those in the act of falling and those already bowed by trouble. The imagery is not metaphor only; it names God’s posture toward the vulnerable. The double *kol* (twice “all”) keeps the universal horizon.  
  
Rabbinic tradition attached this verse to the nun-gap. b. Berakhot 4b: why no nun in Ashrei (the daily recitation of Ps 145)? Because of a verse about “falling.” Yet David “supported” Israel by placing “supports all who fall” next. Close readers noticed what the poem’s music implies: even the alphabet can trip; the King steadies it.

### Verse 15

“The eyes of all look to you expectantly” (*’einei kol elekha yesabberu*). The idiom of eyes looking in dependence is common (cf. Ps 123:2; 141:8); here it is a zoology of hope, including non-human creatures. The verb *sabar* (Aramaizing; “hope/wait”) is a posture word; the eyes stand in for the whole being. “You give them their food in its season”: *be‘itto* is singular, suggesting that each creature has its appointed time—divine attentiveness is not generic but particular.  
  
The figurative pattern is rich elsewhere: waiting on God as looking (Ps 27:14; 37:9), the “soul waiting” (Ps 62:2; 33:20). Psalm 145 presses the image to creation-wide scale without sentimentality; this is not idyll but economy—the daily gift that makes life possible.

### Verse 16

“You open your hand; you satisfy every living thing with favor” (*pote’ach et yadekha; u-masbi‘a le-khol ḥai ratzon*). The “open hand” is a biblical idiom for generosity (Deut 15:8, 11). The psalm’s brilliance is to put the human ethic into the divine hand: the King models the law he gave. *Masbi‘a* (“satisfy”) promises satiety, not mere survival. *Ratzon* can mean “favor” or “desire”; either way, the line speaks abundance—enough and to spare.  
  
This one verse helped make the psalm beloved in daily liturgy; the Talmud links the thrice-daily recitation to the acrostic and to this open hand (b. Berakhot 4b). The two lines in vv. 15–16 together present God’s economy in two modes: measured provision “at its time” and, at times, an open-handed surplus.

### Verse 17

“Righteous is the LORD in all his ways, and gracious/faithful in all his works.” The two halves balance policy (*derakhav*, “ways” = patterns of governance) and act (*ma‘asav*, “works” = concrete deeds). *Tsaddiq* means more than lawful; it is normed goodness. *Hasid* (here adjectival) names the surplus of covenant love beyond strict justice.  
  
Ibn Ezra addresses the old difficulty: providence is varied—“why wheat to one, barley to another?” Because the Maker knows the creature’s good, as a physician prescribes: righteousness tailored to natures. Radak extends even to predator and prey; the moral order is not violated by nature’s scarcity but sustained through it, with life and death turned toward preservation of life overall.

### Verse 18

“Near is the LORD to all who call on him—to all who call on him in truth.” A universal (“to all”) with an adverbial fence (“in truth”). *’Emet* means more than sincerity; it bears the load of reliability, faithfulness. Metzudat David says it plainly: the mouth and the heart must agree. The verse does not rescind v. 9; it distinguishes between general goodness and intimate nearness. Access is open; reality is not mechanized. Calling “in truth” names the moral and relational shape of prayer that this psalm promotes.  
  
The phrase “near to” appears in Psalm 34:19 of the brokenhearted; here the criterion is calling in truth—a way of saying that nearness is relational, not automatic.

### Verse 19

“He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.” Three steps: desire fulfilled, cry heard, salvation given. *Yir’ah* (“fear”) here is reverent awe, not cowering. The line stands in close parallel to v. 18’s “call in truth,” and it sharpens the relationship: those who keep God in view (*yir’ah*) find their desires answered and, in distress, are rescued.  
  
The pattern is biblical. “He hears” and “he saves” are a classic pair (e.g., Ps 34:17–18). The psalm’s contribution is to set these verbs in the context of kingship as care: not charisma on the throne but attention in trouble.

### Verse 20

“The LORD guards all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.” The *kol*-pair is bracing: all who love / all the wicked. The move from reverent fear (v. 19) to love (v. 20) marks intensification: love names attachment and loyalty. The promise escalates with it: not only rescue in trouble, but guarding that keeps trouble at bay. The second colon (destruction of the wicked) sits in tension with v. 9’s universality; the psalm is content to hold both. Universal goodness does not entail universal acquittal. The point is protective: the space of generous rule is secured by judgment on what would devour it.  
  
Define: antithetic parallelism is when the second colon contrasts the first; here mercy and judgment clarify each other.

### Verse 21

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD; and all flesh shall bless his holy name forever and ever.” The inclusio closes: the “forever and ever” from v. 1 returns, and with it the widening circle—now “all flesh” (*kol basar*), a biblical merism for humanity (cf. Isaiah 40:5), sometimes broader. The poet keeps the “I”—praise is still spoken by a real mouth—but he hears, beyond his voice, a chorus.  
  
“Holy name” adds a note not yet heard: holiness is what happens when the poem’s character-traits (grace, compassion, patience) are recognized as the way God’s uniqueness touches the world. The final line is precisely the poem’s method: a single speaker, disciplined to daily blessing, inviting a world to join in a praise whose content is the open hand.  
  
Definitions recap:  
- Acrostic: a poem whose lines begin with successive letters of the alphabet.  
- Inclusio: a framing device where the same phrase or idea opens and closes a unit.  
- Colon: a single line of Hebrew poetry, often paired in parallelism.  
- ANE: Ancient Near East, the cultural-political world of the Bible.  
- MT/LXX: Masoretic Text, the standard Hebrew Bible; Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation.  
  
Cited figurative parallels:  
- Pouring forth speech: Psalm 19:3; Psalm 119:171; Proverbs 15:2, 28.  
- Eyes looking in dependence: Psalm 123:2; Psalm 141:8; Psalm 27:14; Psalm 37:9.  
- Open hand generosity: Deuteronomy 15:8, 11.  
- “No searching”: Job 5:9; 9:10; 36:26; Isaiah 40:28.  
- Hearing and saving: Psalm 34:17–19.  
  
By careful craft—alphabet, anaphora, pivot from throne to table—the psalm offers a political theology in miniature: the world runs on an open hand. Reciting it daily is less a key to the world to come than a way to keep opening ours.

## 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**: 188,805 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

### Date Produced

October 23, 2025