# Commentary on Psalm 145

## Introduction

Psalm 145 is the only psalm in the Davidic collection that labels itself a “praise” outright. Its title, *tehillah le-David*, points not only to its subject but to its art. The poet arranges his praise as an alphabet—a near-complete acrostic from aleph to tav—so that praise is not a single emotion but an A-to-Z practice. One letter is missing: nun. Ancient readers noticed. A Talmudic gloss hears in that absence an echo of Amos 5:2—“Fallen (naflah), no more to rise”—and sees the psalm’s next line as a deliberate counter: “The LORD supports all who fall” (v. 14). Whatever we make of that homily, the poem turns absence into reassurance: where human letters run out, care begins.

Form matters. Biblical Hebrew poetry moves by parallel lines (a “colon” is a single line within a poetic pair). The second colon does not merely repeat the first; it sharpens or completes it—the classic “A is so, and what’s more, B.” Psalm 145 thrives on this dynamic. It begins with a solitary “I”—“I will extol you, my God the king” (v. 1)—and ends with an unanxious universal: “Let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever” (v. 21). In between, the poem widens its circle: one generation to another, then “they,” then “all your works,” and finally “all flesh.” Praise is not a solo but a chorus that recruits new voices.

The psalm also has a pulse. Where English readers hear ideas, Hebrew listeners heard sound. The opening resolves the paradox of intimacy and royalty: “my God and king” (*elohai hammelekh*)—a private possessive yoked to a public throne. The verb *’aromimkha* (“I will exalt you”) comes from lifting upward. You cannot elevate the infinite; you elevate your own speech. The final phrase “forever and ever” (*le-‘olam va-‘ed*) appears at the beginning, middle, and end (vv. 1–2, 21), a refrain of time that frames the poem’s argument about eternity within a finite body of lines. This bracketing—an “inclusio”—is the poem’s way of saying that time itself becomes material for praise.

The first movement (vv. 3–7) names a problem and a solution. “Great is the LORD… and His greatness cannot be fathomed” (v. 3). The Hebrew says *ein cheqer*—there is no “searching.” That phrase recurs when Israel strains for the horizon of God: see Isaiah 40:28 (“His understanding is unsearchable”) and Proverbs 25:3 (the mind of kings is *ein cheqer*). If God exceeds investigation, what can language do? The poet’s answer is pedagogy: “One generation shall laud your works to another” (v. 4). You cannot assay the divine essence, but you can name deeds. The verbs are tactile: in v. 7, memory “pours forth” (*yabbi‘u*) goodness; the same verb appears when “day to day pours forth speech” (Psalm 19:3) and when the mouth “pours out” folly or malice (Proverbs 15:2; Psalm 94:4). In the poet’s vision, praise, too, is a spring—once compressed memory reaches pressure, it gushes.

At the center (vv. 8–9) stands a creed: “Gracious and compassionate is the LORD, slow to anger and abounding in kindness.” This is the covenant formula of Exodus 34:6, forged in the crisis of the golden calf. Here it functions not as a plea for pardon, but as a ground for praise. And the scope widens: “The LORD is good to all; His compassions are over all His works” (v. 9). The repeated *kol*—“all”—makes the point plain. Divine mercy does not cancel moral distinctions, as the psalm later reminds us (v. 20); but it does drape the whole created order.

Next comes a royal stanza (vv. 10–13). The terms—glory, kingdom, dominion—have deep roots in the ancient Near East, where hymns to gods and kings alike proclaimed eternal rule. Verse 13’s formula—“Your kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, and your dominion through every generation”—resembles the standard liturgical language of divine sovereignty. The Greek translators add a line at this point: “Faithful is the LORD in all his words and holy in all his works.” That addition, echoed later in v. 17, likely preserves a Hebrew line that filled the missing nun in some ancient copies. (Scholars call the Greek translation the Septuagint, or LXX; the medieval Hebrew we use is the Masoretic Text, or MT.) Whether original or not, the thrust is consistent: God’s reign is not merely powerful; it is reliable.

What follows is striking. After the trumpet of kingship, the psalm shifts to the street: “The LORD supports all who fall and straightens all who are bent” (v. 14). True sovereignty is measured not by scepters but by hands. The psalmist lingers on the hand. All eyes “look expectantly” to God (v. 15; the verb is *sabar*, “to hope, wait”), a line that pairs closely with Psalm 104:27: “These all look to you to give them their food in due season.” Then comes the line that made this psalm a fixture of daily prayer: “You open your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor” (v. 16). The image is not invented here. The Torah commands humans to “open your hand” to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:8, 11). Psalm 145 reverses the direction of that obligation: the open human palm is a metaphor learned from the divine one. In a world of clenched political fists, Psalm 145 imagines kingship as an open hand.

The psalm then returns to character (vv. 17–20): “The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all his works.” The parallel of *tsaddiq* (righteous) and *khasid* (faithful) asserts an ethical coherence to divine action—justice and steadfastness are not in competition. That coherence yields availability: “The LORD is near to all who call upon him—who call upon him in truth” (v. 18). “Truth” here is not a secret password but integrity—the alignment of mouth and heart. The sequence is careful: God fulfills the desire (*ratzon*) of those who fear him, hears their cry, and rescues them (v. 19). The vocabulary circles back to v. 16, where God satisfies every living creature’s *ratzon*. Basic living needs are universal; deeper desires are discerned and fulfilled within reverence. The poem ends as it began—with a single voice and an unbounded audience: “My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever and ever” (v. 21).

Two final notes for the curious reader. First, acrostics in the Psalms are not gimmicks. They make memory possible, and they symbolize completeness—praise that runs from A to Z. Here the missing nun is not a crack in the vase but an aperture where grace enters. Second, the poem’s body language is not accidental. Mouth, eyes, hands—these concrete images are the psalm’s theology. Praise is something you do with breath; hope is something your eyes learn; generosity is something your hand practices. The psalm sets those human actions within the larger action of God: God’s hand was open first.

Technical terms used in this essay:

- Acrostic: a poem whose lines begin with successive letters of the alphabet.

- Colon: a single line or half-line of biblical poetry; many verses contain two cola (a parallel pair).

- Inclusio: a literary “envelope,” where a poem begins and ends with the same phrase to frame its contents.

- LXX/MT: LXX is the Septuagint (ancient Greek translation); MT is the Masoretic Text (standard medieval Hebrew). Differences can preserve early variants and help us hear how ancient communities read the psalm.

## 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

*tə-hil-****LĀH*** *lə-dhā-****WIDH*** *'a-rō-mim-****KHĀ*** *'e-lō-****HAY*** *ham-****ME****-lekh wa-'a-vā-rə-****KHĀH*** *shim-****KHĀ*** *lə-ʿō-****LĀM*** *wā-****ʿEDH***  
  
The superscription *tehillah le-David* is unique among the Davidic psalms; it marks this composition as archetypal praise. The opening line makes two audacious pairings. First, “my God the King” (*elohai hammelekh*) yokes intimacy to sovereignty: a private possessive pronoun modifying a public title. Second, the verb *’aromimkha* (“I will exalt you”), literally “lift up,” signals the strange physics of praise: one cannot hoist the infinite, but one can elevate one’s language. The stress pattern—with emphatic beats on *’a-rō-mim-****KHĀ***, *’e-lō-****HAY***, and *ham-****ME****-lekh*—hands the ear a stately rise, suited to enthronement.  
  
“Blessing your name forever and ever” (*le-‘olam va-‘ed*) appears here and returns in v. 2 and v. 21, forming an inclusio (frame) that turns time itself into an instrument of praise. The line’s structure models Hebrew parallelism (two cola joined by sense): “I will exalt you… and I will bless your name…” It’s not tautology. “Exalt” lifts (in speech) the One beyond grasp; “bless” brings the divine name within the sphere of human gratitude and need. Malbim’s distinction is helpful: God in essence is beyond our reach; God’s “name” is how the divine becomes known through providential action.   
  
Traditional comments sharpen the point. Ibn Ezra restrains metaphysics by reminding us that “exalting” is an act of speech, not an alteration in God’s being. Radak hears in the triple “forever and ever” the psalm’s architecture—beginning, middle, and end—so that the vow of praise is threaded through the poem like a bass note. The line is a thesis statement: praise that is at once personal (“my God”) and public (“the King”), poetic and daily (v. 2), finite and forever.

### Verse 2

*bə-khol-****YŌM*** *'a-vā-rə-****KHEKH****-khā wa-'a-hal-****LĀH*** *shim-****KHĀ*** *lə-ʿō-****LĀM*** *wā-****ʿEDH***  
  
The second line brings eternity down to size: “Every day I will bless you.” The doubled stress on *bə-khol-****YŌM*** and *’a-vā-rə-****KHEKH****-khā* gives the phrase a measured cadence, as if to suggest routine without dullness. Radak reads the two cola temporally: “Every day” belongs to this world; “forever and ever” leans into the world to come. Malbim adds a supple theology of time: God “renews the work of creation” daily; therefore praise must be renewed as well. It is not mere repetition but response.  
  
The two verbs, *’avarekh* (“I will bless”) and *’ahalelah* (“I will praise”), are related but not identical. The first often signals gratitude for benefits received; the second, celebration of character beyond immediate utility. This “A, and what’s more, B” arrangement models how biblical parallelism builds thought: the second colon intensifies the first by shifting from temporal practice (daily blessing) to an unlimited horizon (endless praise).   
  
Liturgically, this line contributes to the rabbinic teaching: reciting this psalm three times daily assures a place in the world to come (Berakhot 4b). The claim is not mechanistic; it assumes that a life organized by daily praise is aligned to God’s enduring reality. The stress on *lə-ʿō-****LĀM*** *wā-****ʿEDH***—repeated from v. 1—seals the daily within the eternal.

### Verse 3

***GĀ****-dhōl yə-hō-****WĀH*** *ū-mə-hul-****LĀL*** *mə-****'ŌDH*** *wə-ligh-dhul-lā-****THŌ******'ĒY****-n* ***KHĒ****-qer*  
  
Here the poem names the paradox it will address: God is great (*gadol*), abundantly acclaimed (*mehullal me’od*), and yet His greatness has *ein cheqer*—“no searching.” The stress pattern peaks on *mə-****'ŌDH*** (“very much”) and drops into the cool statement of limit: ***'ĒY****-n* ***KHĒ****-qer*. The phrase is a biblical key. Isaiah 40:28 says “His understanding has *ein cheqer*,” and Proverbs 25:3 calls the mind of kings *ein cheqer*. The point is not despair but posture: worship begins where analysis runs out.  
  
The verse’s parallelism advances thought by accretion. “Great” is reshaped by “much acclaimed”—the poem implicates the community in the act (“much acclaimed” is what people do). Only then does it place a boundary: investigation will not arrive at a final composite of “greatness.” Ibn Ezra catches the logic: we speak of God’s greatness because praise is our fidelity, not because we have exhausted the subject. The psalm’s solution to unsearchability will be communal memory, not philosophical definition.

### Verse 4

***DŌR*** *lə-****DHŌR*** *yə-sha-****BAKH*** *ma-ʿa-****SEY****-khā ū-ghə-****VŪ****-rō-they-khā ya-****GIY****-dhū*  
  
“Generation to generation”—the doubled stress ***DŌR*** *lə-****DHŌR*** beats like a handoff. The verbs are instructive. *Yeshabbakh* (from *shabakh*, “to praise”) can imply “to enhance,” to recognize increasing value; *yaggidu* (“they will recount”) is the verb of narration. Together they define pedagogy: each generation both heightens appreciation of God’s works (*ma‘asekha*) and retells the “mighty acts” (*gevurotekha*). Radak observes that mortal brevity requires this chain; one life cannot contain everything, but a relay can.  
  
The “A, and what’s more, B” movement clarifies method: the first colon frames praise as recognition; the second colon insists on specificity—God’s acts named and told. The content is deeds, not abstractions; the audience is the next generation, not an anonymous public. In the psalm’s economy, memory is not a museum; it is an artesian well that will begin to “gush” in v. 7.

### Verse 5

*ha-****DHAR*** *kə-****VŌDH*** *hō-****DHE****-khā wə-dhiv-****RĒY*** *nif-l'ō-****THEY****-khā 'ā-****SIY****-khāh*  
  
In Hebrew, the triplet *hadar kevod hod*—splendor, glory, majesty—piles high. The alliteration (h-d-r/ḥ-d) and the triple stress (*ha-****DHAR*** *kə-****VŌDH*** *hō-****DHE****-khā*) slow the reader; the tongue must articulate each term. This is deliberate excess. When ordinary diction is inadequate, the poet stacks near-synonyms, not to say three different things but to make the single reality loom larger.  
  
The first person returns: *’asikhah* (“I will muse/meditate”) is the verb of interior speech, quieter than proclamation. “The words of your wonders” is a surprise. God’s wonders (*nifla’ot*) are likened to words; they communicate, but require human translation. That is the psalmist’s role—interpreting marvels into speech. Ibn Ezra distinguishes public testimony (the generations in v. 4) from private contemplation (the “I” here). The logic is cumulative: communal proclamation needs the contemplative, and vice versa; both keep wonder from petrifying into slogan.

### Verse 6

*we-ʿe-****ZŪZ******NŌ****-rə-'ō-they-khā yō'-****MĒ****-rū ū-ghə-dhul-lā-thə-****KHĀ*** *'a-sap-****REN****-nāh*  
  
Two dynamics animate this verse. First, the rare noun *ʿezuz* (“might/force”) joined to *nora’ot* (“awesome deeds”) produces a thunderous sound—note the double stress on ***ZŪZ*** and ***NŌ***—befitting awe that “makes you shiver.” Second, the voice toggles: “they will say,” then “I will recount.” Community records; the poet interprets. The ketiv/qere variation on “your greatness” (plural vs. singular) is telling. Do we name “greatnesses” to honor multiplicity, or “greatness” to honor unity? The tradition reads singular—one greatness manifesting in many acts.  
  
The verse also clarifies a theological nuance: others may focus on the fearsome (plagues, judgments—*nora’ot*); the psalmist insists that “greatness” lies behind and beyond terror. As Malbim argues, judgments that provoke fear are ultimately rooted in God’s larger good: awe is not an end in itself but a pathway back to order and mercy. The verse teaches us to move from event to character.

### Verse 7

***ZĒ****-kher rav-tū-və-****KHĀ*** *ya-****BIY****-ʿū wə-tsidh-qā-thə-****KHĀ*** *yə-ran-****NĒ****-nū*  
  
Memory turns liquid: *yabbi‘u* (“they will pour forth”). The figurative language database shows how this verb works elsewhere. Psalm 19:3: “Day to day pours forth speech”—speech as a spring. Proverbs 15:2: “The mouth of fools pours out folly”—gushing talk without prudence. Psalm 94:4: the wicked “pour out” arrogant speech. Here the gush is “the remembrance of your abundant goodness.” When recollection reaches saturation, it spills.  
  
The second colon heightens the first: from goodness (*tov*) to righteousness (*tsedaqah*), from liquid flow to singing (*yerannenu*). The pairing suggests that gratitude (*tov*) catalyzes joy in justice (*tsedaqah*). Radak notes the grammar: *rav* here functions as a noun—“abundance”—not an adjective. It is not “your good is great,” but “the abundance of your good.” The stress pattern lifts into song with *yə-ran-****NĒ****-nū*. The verse teaches that memory is not storage but surplus; when it overflows, it becomes music.

### Verse 8

*khan-****NŪN*** *wə-ra-****KHŪM*** *yə-hō-****WĀH******'E****-rekh 'a-****PA****-yim ū-ghə-dhol-****KHĀ****-sedh*  
  
The psalm places Exodus 34:6 at its center: gracious (*ḥannun*), compassionate (*raḥum*), slow to anger (*’erekh appayim*), abounding in kindness (*rav ḥesed*). In Hebrew the cadence is liturgical, with balanced stresses on each attribute and the divine name at the hinge. The anthropomorphism “long of nostrils” is vivid: anger is a breath that flares; God’s breath is patient.   
  
This creed, born in crisis, is recited here as praise. The move is theological: mercy is not episodic but essential. Ibn Ezra parses the attributes as dispositions and actions: grace answers the cry, compassion shields from harm. Malbim argues, paradoxically, that even punishments are governed by these traits—if God delays anger, it is to create room for repentance; if kindness abounds, it seeks restoration. The next verse universalizes this creed; together they claim that the world’s fabric is mercy-forward.

### Verse 9

*tōv-yə-hō-****WĀH*** *la-****KŌL*** *wə-ra-kha-****MĀY****-w ʿal-kol-ma-ʿa-****SĀY****-w*  
  
Two *kol*s—“to all” and “over all His works”—make the scope unmistakable. The line is carefully framed: “Good [is] the LORD to all,” then “His compassions are over all His works.” The plural “compassions” (*raḥamim*) evokes repeated, varied mercies; the preposition *‘al* suggests an overshadowing, a maternal hovering (cf. Deut 32:11). The stress falls on the two *kol*s; the ear hears totality.  
  
Traditional readers wrestled with election: if God is good to all, what of Israel’s chosenness? Ibn Ezra’s answer is practical: human kings can be good only to a few; the divine king is not so limited. Malbim presses further: God is good even to the wicked—not by indulging wickedness but by plotting their return. The verse is not naïve universalism; verse 20 will insist on judgment. But the psalm wants the default assumption to be mercy, not suspicion.

### Verse 10

*yō-****DHŪ****-khā yə-hō-****WĀH*** *kol-ma-ʿa-****SEY****-khā wa-kha-siy-****DHEY****-khā yə-vā-rə-****KHŪ****-khāh*  
  
“All your works shall thank you… and your faithful ones shall bless you.” The first clause personifies creation: even mute creatures “thank” by fulfilling their design. Radak cleverly mediates: humans “thank on their behalf” by recognizing the wisdom in their being and sustenance. The second clause narrows from “all works” to those who live by *ḥesed*—steadfast devotion. The parallelism is not redundancy but layering: existence testifies; faith blesses.  
  
The sound pattern binds the halves: *yō-****DHŪ****-khā… yə-vā-rə-****KHŪ****-khāh*. The echoing *-khā* suffix keeps the prose close to the addressee. Malbim adds a dynamic ethical note: the *hasidim* do not only receive blessing; they become conduits of it. The two-tier response—universal witness and particular devotion—maps neatly onto the psalm’s widening circles.

### Verse 11

*kə-****VŌDH*** *mal-khū-thə-****KHĀ*** *yō'-****MĒ****-rū ū-ghə-vū-rā-thə-****KHĀ*** *yə-dha-****BĒ****-rū*  
  
Royal vocabulary gathers: glory (*kavod*), kingship (*malkhut*), might (*gevurah*). The syntax is balanced and dignified, with stresses falling symmetrically on the nouns and verbs: a stately procession of four beats. The two verbs are not exact synonyms; *yomeru* (they will say) connotes public declaration, while *yedabberu* (they will speak) suggests extended exposition. A kingdom both proclaims and explains itself.  
  
In ancient Near Eastern hymns, gods and kings were praised as universal rulers. Israel takes this stock language and assigns it exclusively to YHWH—without enthroning any human proxy. The effect is polemical without being shrill: the grandeur of royal terms is retained, but the definition of rule will soon be altered by vv. 14–16.

### Verse 12

*lə-hō-****DHIY****-ʿa liv-****NĒY*** *hā-'ā-****DHĀM*** *gə-vū-rō-****THĀY****-w ū-khə-****VŌDH*** *ha-****DHAR*** *mal-khū-****THŌ***  
  
The infinitive *lehodi‘a* (“to make known”) states purpose. Royal language is not for internal consumption only; it is pedagogy for “the children of Adam”—a deliberately universal phrase. The fourfold object—mighty acts, glory, splendor, kingdom—almost overwhelms the line, as if to say that human words strain to carry the freight of divine rule. The sound pattern (*ū-khə-****VŌDH*** *ha-****DHAR***) carries a soft alliterative hum.  
  
The verse also clarifies an ethic of witness: worship spills into instruction. To confess kingship in the sanctuary is to accept responsibility to announce it beyond. Radak insists the faithful should “make known” to those who do not yet recognize; Meiri notes the switch between third and second person, a common Hebrew poetic feature that enacts the move from talk about God to speech addressed to God.

### Verse 13

*mal-khū-thə-****KHĀ*** *mal-****KHŪTH*** *kol-ʿō-lā-****MIY****-m ū-mem-shal-****TKHĀ*** *bə-khol-****DŌR*** *wā-****DHŌR***  
  
Eternal kingship is stated in formulaic terms that find parallels in ancient royal hymns: an everlasting kingdom, a dominion through all generations. The Hebrew plays with time: *olamim* (ages/eons) is cosmic time; *dor va-dor* (generation to generation) is human time. God rules both. The line’s stresses fall on *mal-****KHŪTH*** and ***DŌR****…* ***DHŌR***, giving a palpable sense of span.  
  
Here the textual tradition matters. The Greek (LXX) adds: “Faithful is the LORD in all his words, and holy in all his works.” That sentence resembles v. 17 (“righteous in all his ways and faithful in all his works”), and in several Hebrew manuscripts (and a Qumran psalm scroll), a nun-line akin to the LXX survives. Many scholars think the acrostic originally included a nun verse here, later lost in the MT. The logic of the psalm is not altered either way; the addition emphasizes reliability (fitting an acrostic’s theme of completeness) and anticipates the accessibility of vv. 18–20.   
  
Malbim’s distinction is helpful: *malkhut* (kingship) can suggest ordered governance, while *memshalah* (dominion) suggests effective power. The verse says God has both, everywhere, always.

### Verse 14

*sō-****MĒ****-khə yə-hō-****WĀH*** *lə-khol-han-nō-fə-****LIY****-m wə-zō-****QĒF*** *lə-khol-hak-fū-****FIY****-m*  
  
This is the psalm’s most humane turn. After proclamations of empire, the poet pictures a street scene: people who have fallen (*noflim*), people bent double (*kefufim*). God “supports” (*somekh*) and “straightens” (*zoqef*). The double “to all” (*lə-khol… lə-khol*) universalizes vulnerability, not privilege. The stresses on ***MĒ****-khə*, ***LIY****-m*, and ***QĒF*** make the action crisp and hopeful.  
  
Tradition connects this line to the missing nun: having “omitted” a letter associated with “fallen,” the psalm immediately asserts God’s support of those who fall (Berakhot 4b). The imagery is tender and concrete. Deuteronomy 33:27 speaks of God’s “everlasting arms”—a related image of divine support—and Psalm 18:19 calls God “my support” (*mish‘an*). Here kingship is redefined not by conquest but by upholding the vulnerable. This is the psalm’s political theology: sovereignty is measured by the posture of those under it.

### Verse 15

*ʿēy-nēy-****KHŌL*** *'ē-****LEY****-khā yə-sa-****BĒ****-rū wə-'a-****TĀH*** *nō-thēn-lā-****HEM*** *'eth-'okh-****LĀM*** *bə-ʿi-****TŌ***  
  
“The eyes of all look to you expectantly.” The verb *sabar* (to hope, wait) expresses patient need; its stress *yə-sa-****BĒ****-rū* gives the line its hinge. Psalm 104:27 is the close parallel: “These all look to you to give them their food in due season.” The psalmist’s phrasing—“in its time” (*be-‘itto*)—adds a liturgical sense of measure: provision arrives not randomly but right-timed.  
  
Traditional commentators extend the line’s reach. Radak points out that different creatures have different diets; divine wisdom provisions each according to nature’s law. Meiri observes that even creatures “without consciousness” still “wait” by instinct; their striving is the imprint of reliance. The grammar also participates in the meaning: the alternation of *’eleikha* (to you) and *’attah* (and you) frames a relation of gaze and response. Creation looks; God gives.

### Verse 16

*pō-****THĒ****-kha 'eth-yā-****DHE****-khā ū-mas-****BIY****-ʿa lə-khol-****KHAY*** *rā-****TSŌN***  
  
“You open your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor/desire.” The image is one of Scripture’s most beloved. Deuteronomy uses the identical gesture of generosity for humans: “You shall surely open your hand” to the poor (Deut 15:8, 11). Psalm 145 applies that ethic to God—the prototype of generosity. Liturgically, this is one reason the Talmud singles out this psalm for thrice-daily recitation (Berakhot 4b).  
  
The last word, *ratzon*, is multivalent: desire, favor, acceptance. Ibn Ezra reads it as “what suffices”; Rashi hears “propitious favor.” The syntax allows a theologically rich reading: the divine “will” opens the divine “hand,” so that generosity is not reactive but willed. The stress pattern (*pō-****THĒ****-kha… ū-mas-****BIY****-ʿa*) performs the opening and the filling. The psalm’s royal theology is fully recast: the emblem of rule is not the clenched fist but the open palm.

### Verse 17

*tsa-****DIY****-q yə-hō-****WĀH*** *bə-khol-də-rā-****KHĀY****-w wə-khā-****SIY****-dh bə-khol-ma-ʿa-****SĀY****-w*  
  
“Righteous in all his ways, and faithful in all his works.” The Hebrew pairs morals (*tsaddiq*) with fidelity (*khasid*), and “ways” (habits, patterns) with “works” (specific acts). It is a double universal (*bə-khol… bə-khol*) that closes any loophole where God might be thought capricious. The mirrored stress on *tsa-****DIY****-q* and *wə-khā-****SIY****-dh* creates a moral balance you can hear.  
  
Readers have always asked the hard question: if God is righteous in all ways, why do the wicked prosper, and the righteous suffer? Ibn Ezra answers by analogy: like a skilled physician, God prescribes differently for different constitutions. Malbim suggests that recompense is distributed across this world and the next; visible anomalies do not mean ultimate injustice. The line’s point is not to end debate but to insist that moral coherence is theologically non-negotiable.  
  
Note that the LXX’s extra line at v. 13 (“faithful in all his words… holy in all his works”) is a cousin to this verse. Together they form a cluster of assurances: righteous—faithful—holy. The psalm makes character the basis of availability in the next line.

### Verse 18

*qā-****RŌV*** *yə-hō-****WĀH*** *lə-khol-qō-rə-****'ĀY****-w lə-****KHŌL*** *'a-****SHER*** *yiq-rā-****'U****-hū ve-'e-****METH***  
  
Nearness is the core of biblical prayer. Unlike distant deities, the God of Israel is “near to all who call”—with a condition: “in truth” (*be’emet*). “Truth” here is not data but integrity—the heart in alignment with the mouth. The stress falls on *qā-****RŌV*** (“near”) and on the final *ve-’e-****METH*** (“in truth”), so the line begins with availability and ends with authenticity.   
  
Ibn Ezra notes the practical dimension: a human king far away cannot help you; God can—if the call is genuine. The line balances universal access (*lə-khol*) with moral realism—God is not a vending machine. The psalm has moved from kingship (vv. 11–13) to sustenance (vv. 14–16) to character (v. 17) to nearness: governance, provision, goodness, and presence are not separable.

### Verse 19

*rə-tsōn-yə-rē-****'ĀY****-w ya-ʿa-****SEH*** *wə-'eth-shaw-ʿā-****THĀM*** *yish-****MAʿ*** *wə-yō-shiy-****ʿĒM***  
  
Three steps: God fulfills the desire (*ratzon*) of those who fear Him, hears their cry, and saves them. The line’s cadence builds—*ya-ʿa-****SEH****… yish-****MAʿ****… wə-yō-shiy-****ʿĒM***—from sustaining desire to answering emergency to delivering. The link to v. 16 is striking: every living thing has *ratzon* (need/desire); those who revere God have *ratzon* that is fulfilled. Provision is universal; fulfillment is relational.  
  
“Fear” (*yir’ah*) here means reverent awe, not terror; it is the posture appropriate to the majesty already confessed. Malbim draws a pastoral distinction: those who live by fear may cry out and be rescued; those who live by love (v. 20) are preserved so as not to need rescue as often. The psalm is not laying down a formula so much as sketching a pattern of divine attentiveness.

### Verse 20

*shō-****MĒR*** *yə-hō-****WĀH*** *'eth-kol-'ō-ha-****VĀY****-w wə-****'ĒTH*** *kol-hā-rə-shā-****ʿIY****-m yash-****MIY****-dh*  
  
This is the psalm’s hardest antithesis. God “watches over all who love Him”—preemptive care—“but all the wicked He will destroy.” The verbs are chosen carefully: *shomer* is vigilant protection; *yashmid* is decisive judgment. The stress pattern underscores the contrast, with emphatic beats on *shō-****MĒR*** and *yash-****MIY****-dh*.  
  
How does this square with v. 9’s universal mercy? The psalm keeps both truths: mercy is the default fabric; judgment is the final accounting. Radak elevates *’ohavav* (“those who love Him”) as the highest form of relation—beyond fear, beyond transaction—and reads the promise eschatologically: a future without entrenched wickedness. Ibn Ezra reads practically: those who love God are guarded so that calamity often does not befall them; the wicked’s end is destruction, even if not immediate. The point is not gloating over enemies; it is refusing to sentimentalize evil.

### Verse 21

*tə-hil-****LATH*** *yə-hō-****WĀH*** *yə-dha-ber-****PIY*** *wiy-vā-****RĒ****-khə kol-bā-****SĀR******SHĒM*** *qodh-****SHŌ*** *lə-ʿō-****LĀM*** *wā-****ʿEDH***  
  
The psalm returns to where it began—praise on the lips—but widens the audience to *kol-basar* (“all flesh”). In biblical idiom, “flesh” means living creatures in their frailty. It is a democratic and biological term, more inclusive than “all people.” The stress on *yə-dha-ber-****PIY*** (“my mouth will speak”) gives the individual pledge weight; the stresses on *kol-bā-****SĀR*** and ***SHĒM*** *qodh-****SHŌ*** lift the horizon to the universal and the holy. The final *lə-ʿō-****LĀM*** *wā-****ʿEDH*** completes the inclusio begun in vv. 1–2.  
  
The movement from “I” to “all flesh” is the psalm in miniature. Private devotion is the seed; public doxology is the flower. Meiri hears a messianic overtone, as do later prophets (“all flesh shall come to worship,” Isaiah 66). The psalm’s project is communal by design. Praise is not a mood. It is a pedagogy, a politics, and, finally, a hope—that the open hand that feeds all will teach all to open theirs.  
  
Definitions:  
- Parallelism: the core poetic technique in Hebrew verse, in which a second line restates, completes, or contrasts with the first (“A is so, and what’s more, B”).  
- LXX/MT: the Septuagint (ancient Greek translation) and the Masoretic Text (standard medieval Hebrew text). Differences illuminate early readings.  
- Inclusio: a framing device in which a section begins and ends with the same phrase, marking unity.  
- Colon: a single poetic line within a verse; many biblical verses consist of two cola forming a parallel pair.  
  
Figurative language parallels cited:  
- “No searching” (*ein cheqer*): Isaiah 40:28; Proverbs 25:3.  
- “Pour forth” (*yabbi‘u*): Psalm 19:3; Proverbs 15:2; Psalm 94:4.  
- “Eyes look to you” (*sabar*): Psalm 104:27.  
- “Open your hand”: Deuteronomy 15:8, 11.  
- “Support” imagery: Deuteronomy 33:27 (“everlasting arms”); Psalm 18:19 (“my support”).   
  
This psalm is the alphabet of praise, with one letter missing—so that what is broken can be held.

## 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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