

### Categories or Genres of Psalms

**Wisdom/Torah Psalms** are characterized by their subject matter, which especially concerns God's law (*torah*), commandments, statutes, etc., and/or by certain formal resemblances to biblical wisdom literature in their style and diction, themes and motifs, and/or rhetorical functions.

- style and diction: pertinent similarities may include the use of 1) declarative admonition; 2) abecedary (i.e., alphabetic acrostic structure; cf. acrostic psalms category); 3) beatitudes or "blessed is/are" sayings (also called "macarisms," from the Greek *makarios*, meaning "blessed"); and/or 4) comparative "better than" sayings.
- theme and motif: pertinent similarities may include 1) the contrastive "two ways" motif; 2) attentiveness to the problem of retribution; and/or 3) a focus on "fear of the LORD."
- rhetorical function: pertinent similarities may include 1) didactic provision of instruction; 2) exaltation of righteousness; and/or 3) exaltation of God's law or instruction (*torah*).

Examples of wisdom/torah psalms include Ps. 1, 19, 32, 34, 37, 49, 73, 78, 111, 112, 119, and 128.

**Royal/Messianic Psalms** are characterized not by any formal or structural features, but by their subject matter, which concerns the Davidic king (i.e., David or the son of David), the LORD's anointed (*mashiah*, whence comes the term "messiah"). Such psalms are often though not always keyed to one or more of the primary characteristics of the Davidic covenant, including its establishment of

- 1) an everlasting house/dynasty (see Ps. 45:6; 89:36-37);
- 2) an unconditional divine guarantee (see Ps. 89:30-34);
- 3) a father-son relationship between God and the Davidic king (see Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27);
- 4) the Davidic king as the LORD's anointed (i.e., both royal, see Ps. 45:7; 89:20, and priestly, see Ps. 110:4);
- 5) the international scope of the Davidic kingdom (see Ps. 2:8; 72:8, 11, 17);
- 6) the centrality of Jerusalem and Mount Zion (see Ps. 2:6; 20:2; 110:2; 132:13); and
- 7) the Jerusalem Temple as covenant sign (see Ps. 18:6; 20:2; 45:15)

Examples of royal/messianic psalms include Ps. 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 110, 132, and 144.