A Literary-Structural Analysis of Psalm 22

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1 author:

Ernst R Wendland
Stellenbosch University
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1. Introduction

Hebrew poetic discourse—specifically, the precatory texts found in the collection known as the Psalter (the "Book of Praises")—features a layered type of structural organization consisting of several closely related levels. These are all integrated into a hierarchically arranged unity which provides the basic framework for a given poem's content, its major topics and thematic elements in particular, as well as its expression of communicative purpose. In order then to correctly understand and interpret the meaning of a psalm, one

must be prepared to progressively uncover the overlapping strata of structure in order to discern how the different levels are related to one another and to the ideational and emotive core which they convey.

A discourse analysis of this nature (cf. Wendland 2013) will be concerned, therefore, with the composition of the whole along with its parts—the macro- as well as the micro-structure. First of all, this will involve determining the significant *units* of construction and their manifold inter-*relationships*. One must observe how the various segments are arranged with respect to one another—either paradigmatically (by semantic *analogy*) or paradigmatically (by proximate *association*)—in the development of the essential "message" of the text. Once this crucial task has been satisfactorily accomplished, the analyst will be in a position to provide some insight into the communicative *function*(s) of the text, which may be investigated in terms of two key questions: What effects did the original author, whether known or posited (the "implied author") intend for his literary work to achieve in the initial setting of performance, which would normally be *oral-aural* in nature? Second, how may the sacred poem in translation be expected to operate within a setting of worship involving some contemporary society and a disparate socio-cultural milieu?

The main purpose of this essay is to illustrate a method of systematic text analysis, with special reference to Psalm 22.[1] This features a "literary-structural" approach, which seeks to delineate the overall organization of the poetic composition (its *macro*structure) in an effort to determine how the Hebrew author shaped his God-addressed message so as to accomplish some basic worship-oriented objectives, frequently on behalf of the corporate community of faith. Larger constructions, as has been suggested, are verbally

[1] Psalm 22 was chosen for this exercise because of its relative familiarity, its moderate length, its literary quality, and its significant theological content. Some scholars would not agree with this choice: "There is something foolhardy about tackling this Psalm. It is long, complex, and puzzling…" (Magonet 1994:101). On the other hand, all critics recognize that there is something most impressive about this poetic prayer: "The whole psalm has something of this grandiose dimension—the powerful animals that attack [the psalmist], the call to all nations to celebrate God's power. There is a world of belief at stake here" (ibid.:102).

built up out of smaller ones, and therefore it is also important to take into consideration the finer aspects of literary creation (the *micro*structure). The aim is to produce a more objective exposition of the artistic text—that is, via an explicit set of procedures to cogently and clearly account for as much as possible of the data recorded in the Masoretic Text (realizing of course that every analysis is only partial at best and inevitably perspectival). Due to limitations of space, a complete microstructural study will not be attempted, excluding, for example, a survey of the psalm's full lexical inventory, most of its phonological features (e.g., poetic accents), and many text-critical issues. I will rather concentrate on giving a broad outline of the poetic arrangement of the text in relation to the psalmist's expression of major theological concepts and personal feelings. It is, after all, a powerful, passionate prayer that conveys an initial complaint and pointed appeal that is later coupled with confident affirmation and praise directed to the merciful "LORD/Lord" (אֲדֹנָי/יְהוָה) of all peoples (22:22, 30; *all references will be to versification of the English text*).

A few final observations: First, the exposition below, in addition to being partial and selective, exemplifies just one of many possible methodologies and therefore might be helpfully complemented by other analytical approaches to the text. Second, the Masoretic Text (MT) is presumed formally "innocent" until proven "guilty" (i.e., corrupted, nonsensical, requiring emendation) in view of credible, strongly supported variant options (e.g., LXX, DSS). Finally, once an expressive poem, in any language, has been dissected and lies in pieces, as it were, on the printed page of a silent text, a major portion of its literary, that is, its artistic and rhetorical,[2] vitality has been lost. The communicative value of the whole is undoubtedly greater than the sum of its parts, especially when the latter are presented in a completely different language and medium

[2] I view the "literary" dimension of a text as having a twofold focus on: a) **form**—the "artistry" of how the text is composed; and b) **function**—the "rhetoric" of how the literary forms are employed to carry out general and specific communicative objectives within the text. This analysis is also concerned with "structure" on two levels—the *micro*-level of the individual poetic colon or bicolon, and the *macro*-level, which deals with purposeful combinations and strategic arrangements of poetic lines within the psalmic discourse as a whole (cf. Wendland 2004:1-27).

of message transmission. Thus, my study can offer but a limited, cloudy glimpse of the biblical composition—a tangible *soundscape* that can never be fully comprehended or appreciated due to our present distance from its original context (time, culture, religious tradition, ecological environment, and so forth). Any literary (poetic) work must be emotively and sensorially *experienced*, ideally in a similar setting and circumstances, over and above being cognitively "understood." To the extent that I am unable to accomplish these fundamental objectives by bridging the gap, the following description will be that much removed from the full "meaning" of Psalm 22, whether originally intended or that which has been perceived by competent biblical scholars throughout the ages.

2. Patterns of continuity and points of discontinuity in a biblical text[3]

The rationale for my method of discourse analysis finds its basis in the original context of generation and usage of the Psalms—and most of the other Old Testament literature as well. This involved a communication context that featured an *oral-aural* mode of text composition, transmission, and performance. Whether these religious poems were actually composed aloud or not (*they probably were*), it is undoubtedly true that this was their principal medium of realization, either for personal devotion or, more likely, for public articulation (singing, reciting, chanting, etc.) in some communal ritualized observation or worship setting.[4] It is highly probable, therefore, that the psalms were formulated specifically with oral production in mind—for an audience which did not have immediate access to a written text—and this naturally affected their manner of verbal construction. Thus, these prayers or praises had to be prepared in such a way that they would be memorable, readily expressed, audibly intelligible to, and appreciated by a listeners under the normal circumstances of private or group worship. This auditory requirement arguably necessitated a distinct method of sacred, poetic composition, one

[3] This analytical perspective is based upon the study of chapter 2 in *Studies in the Psalms* (2017).

[4] Berlin touches upon this vital aspect of Hebrew poetry in the following comment: "Occasionally provided by the exegete, but often left to the reader, has been the actual [audible] reading of the poem—the making sense and beauty from its sounds, words, and structures, the perception that it is a unified entity with a distinctive message" (1996:314).

which was expected to be in harmony with the traditional literary and liturgical norms of that particular ANE age and religious milieu.

The author could not depend at all upon standard typographical conventions such as capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, strategic spacing, and so forth in order to clarify his sequence of words (thoughts) and to emphasize the main points of his message. The Hebrew written texts (on scrolls) which recorded and preserved these prayer-praise poems did not make such provisions for readers, which meant that the texts were not very legible at all. Therefore, lectors often had to practice reading, or even memorizing them in advance, as part of normal preparation before any public presentation. For his part, the poet would rely upon a cluster of stock oral-based techniques both to shape and to sharpen his key ideas and deeply felt emotions. He utilized such features, generally familiar within the religious tradition, to structure a text so that it would manifest the familiar characteristics of a "well-formed" discourse, including adaptations made in keeping with current literary criteria, namely, the relevant and appropriate selection, arrangement, progression, cohesion-building, and foregrounding of conceptual content. Furthermore, within this general framework of more or less "universal" properties, he was able to access and manipulate his repertory of preferred poetic devices in order to achieve a variety of more specific rhetorical and artistic effects (*to be illustrated with reference to Psalm 22 below*).

The Hebrew poet, like any other, largely accomplished these creative objectives by skillfully playing upon the opposing, but complementary forces of continuity and discontinuity in the formation of his God-focused message. *Continuity* is needed in order to give one's composition a sense of unity, perspective, harmony, purpose, and progression. *Discontinuity*, on the other hand, provides the text with the necessary variation, novelty, emphasis, prominence, and occasionally also suspense so that its main ideas stand out sufficiently and are not only readily understandable, but esthetically pleasing to the envisioned audience and also emotively moving with respect to particular actions and attitudes.

These are rather basic notions, to be sure, but their realization in literary, especially creative poetic discourse, can assume many different forms—from the most elemental (e.g., overt repetition), to the highly sophisticated (e.g., suggestive allusion), and they may encompass any or all strata of linguistic organization, from elemental sounds to text-spanning chiastic constructions. Thus, the twin forces of conjunction (continuity) and disjunction (discontinuity) , which are grounded in one's perception of the essential qualities of *similarity* and *difference*, operate in tandem to effect the holistic and harmonious production of an aesthetically, as well as theologically satisfying literary-liturgical work. Correspondingly, these qualities also furnish the principal diagnostic criteria according to which a given poetic text or corpus may be evaluated and judged as being either a relatively outstanding, mediocre, or poor example of a particular genre that may be used in the intended setting of worship.

The original public circumstances of psalmic performance would naturally dictate that the poet should maintain a certain degree of simplicity, directness, and propriety in his composition. He realized that he was creating a piece primarily for a listening audience, who were able to apprehend the reverential message only through the medium of *sound*. This was particularly pertinent in a *religious* context of personal or corporate worship, where an additional measure of reverence and decorum would normally need to be preserved. This situationally-imposed limitation upon artistic "freedom," if we can call it that, appears to be rather evident in the sacred poetry of the Hebrew Bible, as many people, even scholars, are quick to conclude. But most readers (let alone listeners) never get beyond such an immediate and superficial esthetic evaluation. As will be demonstrated in this study, the common techniques of biblical lyric composition, though seeming simple in substance, are not always as transparent or unsophisticated as they may at first appear. This soon becomes evident once one begins to probe more deeply beneath the outer layers of the literary "onion" to examine the more intricate seams of continuous and discontinuous construction that become visible there.

3. Poetic parallelism and its prominence in biblical discourse

One of the most prominent and hence widely recognized characteristics of Hebrew poetic discourse is normally referred to by the term "parallelism."[5] For hundreds of years now, biblical scholars have made various attempts to describe and define this literary phenomenon, which of course is not limited to the so-called "poetic" books of Scripture (e.g., Genesis 49, Luke 1, 1 Corinthians 13, Revelation 7). The only real point of agreement seems to be that parallelism is typically realized over the space of a pair of adjacent, semantically-related utterances (lines, cola) of comparatively limited length, but generally balanced in relation to each other. "The parts of a verse in the Psalms cohere by the principle of repetition, restatement, differentiation, or progression" (VanGemeren 1991:10)—and no doubt additional such poetic "principles" could be identified. At times, for rhetorical reasons, three and even four cola combinations occur, as well as monocola. But two lines (a *bicolon*) is the norm, being phonologically marked in the MT by the minor *athnah* (half-pause) and major *silluq* (full-pause), which often correspond, whether explicitly or implicitly, to two clause units of grammar.

A pair of poetic lines may be linguistically associated with each other in various other ways as a means of specifying the particular type of parallelism involved.[6] Most analysts emphasize the *semantic* connection between the two cola—from Lowth's familiar tripartite classification into "synonymous," "antithetical," and "synthetic" relations, to Kugel's colloquial condensation of these three into "A is so, and what's more B" (or B "seconds" A) (1981:1-2) and Alter's corollary: "the movement of meaning is one of heightening or intensification" (1985:19). Others, like Collins (1978) and O'Connor (1980), focus strictly upon the syntactic features of the lines and how these match up to constitute greater or lesser degrees of parallelism. However precise the latter, more formalized approaches may seem, I find them, like Alter, "unconvincing" (1985:215).

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[5] "Distinctive of Hebrew literature is parallelism, whether in narrative, prose, or poetry" (VanGemeren 1991:9). The category of "prose" normally includes "poetry," but it is important to observe that parallelism is found also in these types of text, though not of course in the variety, complexity, or density as in poetry.

[6] Twenty-five binary semantic sets are summarized with reference to the wider notions of similarity, contrast, time, cause-effect, and "completive addition" in Wendland 2002:98-99.

My approach is more simply to take to notion of "parallelism" in its basic etymological sense as being situated, or lying, "side by side"—with reference to clearly delimited line forms that are regularly placed, primarily in poetic discourse, "alongside each other" in some recognizable and interrelated association involving sound, sense, and/or syntax (Wendland 2007). This would seem to agree with Berlin's definition: "Parallelism may be defined as the repetition of similar or related semantic content or grammatical [formal] structure in adjacent lines or verses" (1996:304). Such a lyric "coupling" (which may also involve three or four cola) therefore manifests various kinds and degrees of linguistic correspondence between (or among) the lines, ranging from the most subtle phonological similarities to utterances that completely contrast with one another in terms of their overt meaning.

Obviously, the more formal and semantic resemblances or correlations that are found between two (or more) lines, especially those that are audibly perceptible, the greater the sense and awareness of parallelism that results—in Jakobson's terms, the more strongly the "poetic principle" is operating. This refers to a compositional strategy that "projects the principle of equivalence[7] from the [paradigmatic] axis of selection into the [syntagmatic] axis of combination" (1960:358), in other words, *similarity* being superimposed upon *contiguity* within the text.[8] Thus, we are not dealing with an either-or phenomenon at all with reference either to "poetry" in relation to "prose," or the

[7] According to Jakobson, "equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguists…where the equivalence is a *relational equivalence* based on sameness within a system" (1985:150, original italics). The application to *translation* can easily be made, which may help resolve some of the confusion concerning the notion of "equivalence" and how it is used in certain approaches, such as "functional equivalence." Thus, there may be *various types* of "relational equivalence" between a ST and a TT, and the *relative degree* of "sameness," or closeness is an important issue that must be carefully negotiated on the basis of pre-determined principles, including those that pertain to the purpose of the translated text in its new setting of use.

[8] "In poetry, the projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination means quite simply that such sameness is used as (the major) means of constructing the whole sequence. . . . Moreover, such parallelisms create a network of internal relations within the poem itself, making the poem into an integrated whole and underlying the poem's relative autonomy" (Jakobson 1985:150).

amount of parallelism that is displayed between any two poetic lines. It is rather a matter of relative degrees involving a *continuum* of stylistic possibilities that forge a dynamic, often implicit connection between the cola. "A" may be related to "B" in any one of a number of different ways which may generate a variety of possible artistic impressions and rhetorical effects. It is "a special structuring of language that calls attention to the 'how' of the message as well as to the 'what'" (Berlin 1996:302). This manifold, variable quality greatly enhances the expressive potential of parallelism to serve as a subtle, yet multifaceted communicative tool in any composition in which it predominates.

Most studies of parallelism and/or Hebrew poetry in general limit the scope of their attention to the microstructure of a given text—to the cola sequence of A and B lines as they exist in syntagmatic juxtaposition to one another. From a discourse perspective, however, this is far too restrictive, for parallelism is not only contiguous, or *conjunctive*, in nature. More importantly for the analysis of complete psalms, such coupling may also be manifested in *disjunction*, that is, separated over a much larger span of text. This fact has some very important implications for the holistic study of poetic (and other) compositions as integral artistic-rhetorical units. In fact, the data reveals that colon-pairing is employed as one of the key structural (i.e., "structurizing") devices in biblical discourse—"parallelism unbound," we might say. In this respect, one of its main macrolevel functions is to *demarcate* the discourse—that is, to mark boundaries and thereby to help signal and establish the onset, midpoint, and conclusion of discrete, larger structural units.

4. Forms and functions of disjunctive parallelism

There are a number of spatial possibilities for realizing the detached type of parallelism referred to above—in other words, different ways of manifesting the related elements of an [A—B +/- C] couplet in its role of delimiting and distinguishing poetic compositional units. Thus the crucial correspondences may appear at any of the following structural combinations:

- the respective *beginnings* of two (or more) *different* compositional units (termed "anaphora");[9]
- the respective *endings* of two (or more) *different* units ("epiphora");
- the *beginning* and *ending* of the *same* unit ("inclusio");
- the adjacent *ending* and *beginning* of *different* units ("anadiplosis");
- the *non-contiguous* ending and beginning of different units ("exclusio");
- the combination of a beginning and/or ending with the *center* of the same segment—or of two or more centers of different segments ("projection");
- an item-for-item chiastic reversal of two series, or "panels," of corresponding elements ("introversion", "palistrophe").

Several of these patterns of linguistic (formal and/or semantic) association may co-occur within the same area of text (a "convergence")—especially anaphora, epiphora, and inclusion—to reinforce an especially prominent structural border. The same compositional features may also operate individually or together to delineate a certain range of text. This delimited span may vary in length from the "strophe" (analogous to a "paragraph" in prose), to a "stanza" (the next larger unit), and on up the hierarchy of discourse organization to enclose an entire poetic work (e.g., a "psalm"). The question of whether one is dealing with a unit beginning, ending, or central core can often be decided only on the basis of evaluating a diversity of interacting literary (artistic, rhetorical) and structural criteria within the context of the lyric composition as a whole. This process of assessment will be illustrated in the subsequent analysis of Psalm 22.

It is clear that verbal *recursion* plays an important part in the positing (and recognition) of these different kinds of disjunctive poetic coupling. The iteration of linguistic features (phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic) may assume varying degrees of *perceived equivalence* according to whether it is based upon *reduplication* (an exact repetition of form), *resemblance* (a partial repetition of form), or *correspondence* (a similarity of meaning, but not form). Such a "correspondence" of meaning could be

[9] See Wendland 2004:126-128. Berlin also refers to the devices of anaphora, epiphora (cataphora), and anadiplosis, but limits their usage to "consecutive lines" and to the individual "word or phrase" (1996:309). I have a much wider scope and broader usage in view.

potentially effected by a diversity of close semantic relationships, such as (*in addition to synonymy*), literal-figurative restatement, base-contrast, reason-result, means-purpose, condition-consequence, time-progression, and so forth. The *range*, or extent of any instance of recursion that links a pair (or more) of cola is also quite variable. A minimum of two key (theological) terms would need to be involved, e.g., the names of God, but the broader the scope of equivalence, the stronger the auditory (or visual and conceptual) impression that is made, and hence also the greater its diagnostic and/or functional significance within a given psalm (or portion of one).

As suggested above, in addition to the *formative* (textual) function, which focuses on linguistic forms, there are also two others of special concern in the analysis of poetic discourse. The *designative* (semantic) function highlights referential, or ideational content—in particular, the author's specification and elaboration of themes and sub-themes, whether literal, figurative, or symbolic in nature. Any (probably) presupposed or intertextually implied information would also need to be investigated, especially with regard to all topically-related psalms in the Psalter. This concern overlaps then with the interpersonal, or *interactive* (pragmatic) function, which takes into special consideration the original (hypothetical) worship setting of the psalm and the primary purpose for which it was used as people communicated with Yahweh, e.g., for petition, thanksgiving, instruction, praise, or profession of faith. Furthermore, one needs to study the presumed expression of emotion on the part of the psalmist or his community during the utterance (recitation, singing, etc.) of a given text (the *expressive* sub-function), the varied illocutionary force of the cola in sequence (the *affective* sub-function), and the generation or maintenance of psychological "contact" with fellow-worshippers (the *phatic* sub-function). And finally, the interactive function must be related also to the *contemporary* context of communication—that is, how the poetic message as expressed in translation is intended and designed to engage users today with respect to their attitudes, feelings, and desires. The overall perceived strength of this cognitive, emotive, and/or volitional

impression, whether great or small, will obviously impact upon their overt behavior as well.[10]

5. Further thoughts on methodology

As already suggested, there is no single or "right way" of carrying out a comprehensive discourse analysis of a biblical text. To some extent the method chosen will depend on the type (genre) of text that is being investigated—narrative, procedural, judicial, expository, hortatory, etc. The approach selected for illustration in this study concentrates initially on the diverse patterns of continuity and points of discontinuity in the poetic work at hand, namely, Psalm 22 in Hebrew.

The literary device of parallelistic "coupling," when realized on the macrostructure of a composition (any subsequent instance of significant recursion being analogous to the "B" element of a bicolon) can produce either one, or both of these formative techniques involving *progression* (continuity) or *interruption* (discontinuity). A displaced (separated) line "B", for example, whether it is corresponding, contrastive, or completive with respect to "A" (Wendland 2002:98), exhibits a perceptible continuation from the latter (its "complement") simply by being semantically related to it. But within the textual context of the psalm as a whole, it will generally mark, that is, distinguish, the location of an initial *aperture* ("anaphora"), a concluding *closure* ("epiphora"), or medial *centrum* (i.e., the core of a given structural unit. In any of these key structural positions, then, a substantial, non-adjacent type of poetic line pairing ("A" ➔ "B") manifests both continuity (a "connection") and discontinuity (a "break") as far as the overall construction of the discourse is concerned.

An accurate perception of such *non-contiguous* "A—B" parallelism on the macro-level of a text is essential for its correct analysis because, more often than not, this feature

[10] Psalm 22 "is characterized by two types of poetic movement: a series of alternating shifts downward and upward (negative and positive feelings), and a sustained shift from [experiencing] exclusion to inclusion in the final upward swing" (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:212). The challenge for translators is to duplicate this crucial pragmatic effect in the TL text, for it is part of the overall "meaning" of the psalm (cf. Wendland 2013:243).

coincides with some type of thematic disjunction (e.g., the onset of a new topic) or reinforcement (e.g., a special emphasis placed on a crucial motif or some critical accompanying emotion). Thus, such textual highlighting often occurs at the semantic *peak* and/or the emotive *climax* of a certain structural unit or sub-section.

While the deliberate coupling of cola, as just described, is perhaps the most important means whereby continuity or discontinuity is forged in Hebrew poetry, it is certainly not the only way. Other devices that often accomplish the same effect, whether individually or in combination involve the familiar literary techniques of *expansion* (e.g., non-parallel recursion such as alliteration, word-pairs, syntactic correspondence, metrical patterning),[11] *contraction* (e.g., ellipsis, asyndeton, the deletion of "prose particles"), *intensification* (e.g., vocative, exclamation, insertion of a separable pronoun), *transformation* (e.g., rhetorical/leading question, enallage, word-order perturbation), and *figuration* (e.g., metaphor, metonymy, personification, hyperbole). The more features that appear conjoined in a given passage, the more "concentrated" it is poetically, the more noticeable perceptually, and hence also the greater the probability that it signals some prominent structural-thematic node within the text.[12]

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[11] By "metrical patterning" I am referring to symmetrical or balanced arrangements of lexical units as manifested in a sequence of poetic lines (cola), e.g., a series of 3:2 or 3:3 bicola, to create a certain "rhythm" of recurrent, stressed (accented) sounds. As Berlin observes, "No one has been able to demonstrate convincingly the existence of a consistently occurring metrical system" in Hebrew poetry, that is, poetic "verse" (1996:302). This is because "strictly speaking, meter requires the recurrence of an element or group of elements with mathematical regularity. The element to be measured may be the syllable (or a certain type or length of syllable), the accent or stress, or the word" (ibid.:308). "Other explanations [of Hebrew meter] have been put forward, but all suffer from the problem of reconstructing the text based on a 'preconceived shape' of Hebrew meter" (VanGemeren 1991:9).

[12] Indeed, it is the combination of these different features that helps to distinguish "poetry" from "prose" in biblical texts (or more correctly perhaps, more [or less] "poetic" from "prosaic" discourse). Berlin (1996) identifies diagnostic "tropes and figures" such as these: parallelism (which could be viewed as incorporating all of the following), terseness (absence of "prose particles"), rhythm, repetition and patterning (e.g., refrain, inclusio, chiasm), imagery (e.g., metaphor, simile), figures of speech (e.g., allusion, hyperbole, irony, rhetorical questions), and distinctive motifs and themes. She adds, significantly: "Poetry also employs sound and joins it to meaning in interesting ways" (ibid.:302).

One might go further to suggest that this feature of parallelized foregrounding in relation to the A and B components of a disjunctive bicolon (or tri-colon, tetra-colon, etc.) is simply an extension of the corresponding poetic feature noted above on the microlevel of organization, including the attribute of ascensive "seconding" (Kugel 1980:8):

> Now by its very afterwardness, B will have an emphatic character…its very reassertion is a kind of strengthening and reinforcing. But often this feature (found in all apposition) is exploited: the meaning of B is indeed more extreme than A, a definite "going one better."

In a similar vein, Robert Alter defines "semantic parallelism" as a device whereby "the characteristic movement of meaning is one of heightening or intensification…of focusing, specification, concretization, even what could be called dramatization" (1985:19). In the case of disjunctive parallelism then, this "heightening" of significance engages not merely the two (or more) parallel lines themselves, but the associated meaning in in their immediate context is also involved, as a progressive, cumulative accretion of communicative (semantic, emotive, affective, etc.) content is created within the poetic prayer. This effective technique for verbally (audibly) delimiting, developing, as well as reinforcing certain important areas within the discourse will be the focus of the following study of Psalm 22, which must necessarily begin with a careful examination of the original Hebrew (MT—based on the *Paratext* 7.4 version).

6. A text-structural display of Psalm 22 (Hebrew)

The following analytical spreadsheet presents a visual "spatialization" of the Hebrew text of Psalm 22. The purpose of this exercise is to display the microstructure of this poetic composition in a way that makes its lexical patterning (especially the recursive elements)[13] and significant word orders (topic and focus) more evident (moving from right to left on the chart). Numbering begins after the heading, as in many English

[13] Significant repetitions are highlighted by gray shading where possible. Note v. 1, for example, where the double vocative suggests urgency and a close personal relationship with "me/my" (*-iy* suffix).

translations; each verse is broken down into "colon" utterance units, as indicated by the number after the decimal point.

The entire text has been divided into putative "strophes," which are separated by blank rows and designated by the capital letters in the leftmost margin; each pairing of two strophes represents a poetic "stanza" (e.g., A + A'). The rationale for these text divisions, moving from the larger to the smaller, will be given in a separate section following the display—in note-like fashion, with each comment identified by a small letter that is also inserted (in boldface) next to the verse/colon (v.co) where it best belongs in the chart. Footnotes are included to provide information on special linguistic problems within the text, exegetical or hermeneutical issues, and literary features of special interest.

v.co	Post-Verb2	Post-Verb1	**VERBAL**	Pre-Verb2	Pre-Verb1
0.1				עַל־אַיֶּלֶת הַשַּׁחַר[14]	לַמְנַצֵּחַ
0.2					מִזְמ֥וֹר לְדָוִֽד׃
A [15]					
1.1 **b**			עֲזַבְתָּ֝נִי	לָ֤מָּה	אֵלִי[16]

[14] Alter has this note: "*ayeleth hashahar*. The name elsewhere meaning 'morning star' (or, literally, 'dawn doe'). One assumes it refers to a musical instrument of some sort or, alternatively, to a melody" (2007:71; cf. v. 19.2). Goldingay observes: "…LXX, Tg make sense in inferring a reference to help here. Dawn is then the moment when help may arrive or the moment when one offers prayer and praise…" (2006:324).

[15] A classical Christian perspective on this psalm by some early Church Fathers teaches us to read it anew in the light of its NT fulfillment: "The psalm is sung by Christ as in the person of all humanity…that when troubles are near, we may pray that he help us" (Pseudo Athanasius). "The words of this psalm are spoken in the person of the crucified one…He speaks consistently in the character of our old self, whose mortality he bore and that was nailed to the cross with him" (Athanasius) (Blaising & Hardin 2008:168).

[16] "The repeated cry, 'Eli, Eli,' shows the intense quality of the bond which heretofore united this devotee of Yahweh to his Creator" (Terrien 2003:230). There is bitter irony in the fact that "the psalmist complains of being forsaken, yet still addresses God and 'my God'" (McCann 1996:762). "The individual within the covenant community did not have to be content with God's commitment to his people as a whole. His promises were not only national but also personal" (VanGemeren 1991:200).

1.2 [17]		מֵ֝יׇשׁוּעָתִ֗י	----------	רָחֹ֑וק	(לָ֝מָּה)
1.3		דִּבְרֵ֖י שַׁאֲגָתִֽי׃	----------(מִ)	(רָחֹ֑וק)	(לָ֝מָּה)
2.1		יֽוֹמָם	אֶקְרָ֣א		אֱ֭לֹהַי
2.2			תַּעֲנֶ֑ה		וְלׇא
2.3	לִ֝י׃	דֽוּמִיָּ֗ה	----------[18]	וְלׇא	וְלַ֥יְלָה
A′					
3.1		קָד֑וֹשׁ	----------[19]		[20]וְאַתָּ֥ה
3.2	[21]יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל׃	תְּהִלּ֥וֹת	[22]יֹושֵׁ֥ב		
4.1[23]		אֲבֹתֵ֥ינוּ	בָּטְח֗וּ		בְּךָ֣

[17] Line 1.2 is semantically very complex on account of an increasing amount of *implicit information*. Thus, the rhetorical question "Why…" is actually expressed two more times: "*Why* (are you) so far from saving me?" — "*Why* (are you so far from hearing) the words of my groaning?" I have indicated the implicit elements on the chart in parentheses and smaller print.

A greater number of long cola appear in the eulogy of Part Two, e.g., in stanza E. These differences may reflect the change in psychological tone as one moves from the psalmist's agitated mental state in Part One (vv. 1-21) to a calm (albeit jubilant) expression of praise and thanks in Part Two (vv. 22-31).

[18] The gapped verb "I call out" (plus *alliteration* in ל) accentuates both the time frame: "day" and night" (i.e., constantly—a *merism*), as well as the lack of a response ("silence, quietness") from "my God" (cf. Ps. 62:1). "Psalm 22 concerns the theological mystery of 'the deaf God'" (Goldingay 2006:327).

[19] The apparent lack of a verb in 3.1 highlights the attributive quality of "holiness" (in this context perhaps also "separateness"—transcendence) being attributed to "you" (God) (cf. Exod. 15:11). On the other hand, it would be possible, along with the LXX, to construe the verbal יֹושֵׁב as part of line one, i.e., "and you sit (as the) holy one," though this construal (e.g., Goldingay 2006:327-328) would detract somewhat from the vivid, highly expressive style.

[20] The initial conjunction plus a separable pronoun indicates a topical *contrast* and marks the onset of a new strophe, as also in 6.1, 9.1, and 19.1. This usage reflects the separation, or distance, that the psalmist perceives between him and his God.

[21] The noun "praises" (תְּהִלָּה) anticipates the occurrence of this root (*halal*) in the psalm's *praise* portion in Part Two (vv. 22, 23, 25, 26).

[22] God's "sitting" here refers to his righteous royal rule (cf. vv. 28, 31), for which he deserves the highest praise, not only from "Israel", but from all "nations" (v. 27).

[23] The allusions to Moses' song at the sea in praise of Yahweh's mighty deliverance of Israel during the Exodus (ch. 15) grow stronger in vv. 4-5; the crucial concept of "trust" is foregrounded by a chiastic construction in v. 4. Once again, there is a double *contrast* implied: the psalmist's present isolation versus

4.2[24]			בָּטְחוּ		
			וַתְּפַלְּטֵמוֹ׃		
5.1			זָעֲקוּ		אֵלֶיךָ
			וְנִמְלָטוּ		
5.2			בָטְחוּ[25]		בְּךָ
			־בוֹשׁוּ׃		וְלֹא
B					
6.1		תוֹלַעַת	[26]----------		וְאָנֹכִי
		־אִישׁ			וְלֹא
6.2		חֶרְפַּת אָדָם	----------		
		וּבְזוּי עָם׃			
7.1		לִי	יַלְעִגוּ		כָּל־רֹאַי
7.2		בְּשָׂפָה[27]	יַפְטִירוּ		

the corporate unity of Israel in the past; their deliverance by Yahweh versus only "disappointment" for him.

[24] The strong parallelism of vv. 4-5, coupled with the distinctive opening bicolon (v. 3), formally reinforces the content of strophe A', continuing the "intensity and inclusiveness that sets Psalm 22 apart" (McCann 1996:762).

[25] "The threefold reference to the 'trust' of the fathers is symmetric with the threefold statement of [the psalmist's] personal trust in the Lord in the phrase 'my God'. The faith of the ancestors and the faith of the psalmist are one, but their experience is far different" (VanGemeren 1991:201)—or so he sadly concludes.

[26] The sense and imagery of this colon reflect and form a dramatic thematic contrast with the beginning of the preceding strophe (3.1), one that is reinforced by the verbless syntactic structure that matches the divine "Holy One" with a worthless "worm"! "God's absence dwarfs his self-image…he feels less than human" (VanGemeren 1994:821). This reading would also support the interpretation of the colonic constituents of v. 3.

[27] The graphic antagonistic interpersonal references here anticipate the heightened bestial images in v. 14. "Sticking out the lip" is "obviously a gesture of scorn, although its exact nature is unknown" (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:216). The people's disparagement of the psalmist contrasts with their praise of Yahweh, in whom they all rely upon for deliverance in times of trouble. They make the same wrong conclusion as Job's three friends.

7.3		רֹאשׁ׃	יָנִיעוּ		
8.1		אֶל־יְהוָה	גֹּל[28]		
			יְפַלְּטֵהוּ[29]		
8.2			יַצִּילֵהוּ		
			חָפֵץ[30]		כִּי
B′ e					
9.1	מִבֶּטֶן	גֹחִי	----------	־אַתָּה	כִּי
9.2	עַל־שְׁדֵי אִמִּי׃	מַבְטִיחִי[31]	----------		
10.1		מֵרָחֶם	הָשְׁלַכְתִּי		עָלֶיךָ
10.2**c**	אָתָּה׃	אֵלִי	[32]----------	אִמִּי	מִבֶּטֶן
C d					
11.1**c**		מִמֶּנִּי	־תִּרְחַק		אַל

[28] The imperative form (often too quickly emended, e.g., Craigie 1983:196; VanGemeren 1991:203; NIV) suggests a sarcastic insertion of direct speech, aimed emphatically by the enemies (like weapons) directly at the psalmist: "[Go ahead and] *trust in Yahweh* [i.e., and see what good it does you]!" The literal sense of the verb is "to roll (something: your cause/burden) onto the Lord."

[29] This verb (יְפַלְּטֵהוּ), used sarcastically by the psalmist's enemies here, ironically recalls his own reflection concerning Yahweh's "deliverance" (וַתְּפַלְּטֵמוֹ) of his people in v. 4.2, thus reinforcing his sense of alienation.

[30] Here we have another case of *ironic intertextuality* (or intertextual irony): In other usages of this verb, God "delights in" a person or group in a positive, beneficent sense, e.g., Num. 14:8, 2 Sm. 22:20, 1 Kgs. 10:9, Pss. 18:19, 41:11. This verb supplies the derisive reason for the three preceding exhortations. "The psalmist's enemies sarcastically appeal to God to help him, because he claims to be an object of divine favor. However, they probably doubted the reality of that claim" (NET note; cf. Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:217).

[31] The *hiphil* participle "You caused me to trust" (מַבְטִיחִי) or "inspired trust" (VanGemeren 1991:204) plaintively recalls the psalmist's repeated assertion "they (our fathers) trusted" (בָּטְחוּ) in v. 4.

[32] This short strophe (B') is almost entirely verbless and features a cohesive chiastic arrangement: "you" + ref. to God + "my mother" – "my mother" + ref. to God + "you" (אַתָּה begins and ends this unit). Just as Yahweh brought Israel forth figuratively as a nation at the Exodus (vv. 4-5, strophe A'), so he gave birth physically to the psalmist by "bringing him out" from his mother (vv. 9-10, strophe B').

11.2		קְרוֹבָה[33]	----------	־צָרָה	כִּי
11.3**b**		עֹוֵֽר׃	----------	־אֵין	כִּי[34]
12.1		פָּרִ֥ים רַבִּ֗ים	סְבָבוּנִי		
12.2			כִּתְּרוּנִי׃[35]		אַבִּירֵ֥י בָשָֽׁן
13.1	פִּיהֶ֑ם	עָלַ֥י	פָּצוּ		
13.2			טֹרֵ֖ף וְשֹׁאֵ֣ג׃		
C’					
14.1			נִשְׁפַּכְתִּי֮		כַּמַּ֪יִם[37]
14.2		כָּל־עַצְמֹותָ֫י	וְהִתְפָּרְד֥וּ		
14.3	כַּדּוֹנָ֑ג	לִבִּ֗י	הָיָ֥ה		
14.4		בְּתֹ֖וךְ מֵעָֽי׃[38]	נָמֵֽס		

[33] Similar, but inverted consonants help to foreground the contrast in concepts “far away” (רחק) versus “nearby” (קָרוֹב) in v. 11.

[34] This second *kiy* is arguably asseverative (emphatic), “Surely…” (cf. Craigie 1983:196).

[35] In contrast to the strict parallelism of v. 11, v. 12 features a chiastic construction, with the two verbs including reference to the psalmist (“me”) being the outer elements. This descriptive assertion is formally and semantically paralleled at the beginning of the next stanza (D) in v. 16, where the same verb form is found (סְבָבוּנִי).

[36] Literally, v. 13 reads: “They gaped against me their mouth—a lion tearing and roaring!” The poet dramatically visualizes the terrifying scene as he personally experienced it, and his syntax seems to reflect this. “To the modern eye, this might look like a contradictory image. But the sequence works as follows: First the crowd of enemies is likened to a herd of brawny bulls; then the poet focuses on the gaping mouths, presumably imagined as human mouths… In the final step, these rapacious men ready to swallow him are likened to lions” (Alter 2007:73). “The description of the lions is more moving in the MT by its brevity and use of participles: ‘tearing’ and ‘roaring’” (VanGemeren 1991:205).

[37] Strophe C’ is given internal cohesion by a triad a similes, each marked by the inseparable preposition *k-*.

[38] “The psalmist feels the impact of [his] alienation deep within his inner being. Great fear is likened to ‘water’ (cf. Jos 7:5; Eze 7:17; 21:7) and to ‘wax’ (2Sa 17:10). These express formlessness and bring out the feelings of an anguished man. He can no longer function as a human being. The ‘bones,’ heart,’ ‘strength,’ and ‘tongue’ fail him…because of a traumatic response to being hated and alienated” (VanGemeren 1994:821-822). These anatomical terms in vv. 14-15 and 16-18 suggest that the psalmist is having a near-death experience (McCann 1996:763).

15.1	כֹּחִי[39] |	כַּחֶרֶשׂ[40]	יָבֵשׁ		
15.2		מַלְקוֹחָי	מֻדְבָּק		וּלְשׁוֹנִי
15.3 **f**			תִּשְׁפְּתֵנִי׃	־מָוֶת	וְלַעֲפַר
D					
16.1		כְּלָבִים	סְבָבוּנִי		כִּי
16.2			הִקִּיפוּנִי	מְרֵעִים	עֲדַת
16.3				יָדַי וְרַגְלָי׃	כָּאֲרִי[41]
17.1		כָּל־עַצְמוֹתָי	אַסַּפֵּר[42]		
17.2			יַבִּיטוּ		הֵמָּה
			יִרְאוּ־בִי׃		

[39] At this point, it may be advisable to adopt "an emendation proposed by many interpreters, medieval and modern, reading *hhiki*, 'my palate,' for the Masoretic *kohhi*, 'my vigor' (a simple reversal of letters in the consonantal text). Palate and tongue recur as parallel terms in Hebrew poetry" (Alter 2007:73; cf. Craigie 1983:196). GNT has "my throat" although "there is no ancient witness in support of" this interpretation (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:220).

[40] Just like a piece of broken pottery, the psalmist feels like a completely broken man, in body and spirit.

[41] "*Heb* "like a lion, my hands and my feet"—"The Hebrew manuscript evidence is almost without exception supportive of the reading 'like a lion'" (Harman 2011:220). However, this reading is often emended because it is grammatically awkward [e.g., 'it can scarcely be correct', Craigie 1983:196], but perhaps this obvious awkwardness is by rhetorical design. "Its broken syntax may be intended to convey the panic and terror felt by the psalmist. The psalmist may envision a lion pinning the hands and feet of its victim to the ground with its paws (a scene depicted in ancient Near Eastern art), or a lion biting the hands and feet" (NET footnote; cf. Goldingay 2006:321). Such "broken syntax" aimed at verbally evoking the psalmist's awful predicament is employed elsewhere in this section (see at v. 13).

Some versions attempt to supply an implicit verb: "Like lions [they maul] my hands and feet" (NJV). Based on the tendency for a certain word in the first line of a bicolon to be necessary for the interpretation of the second line, e.g., "Why?" in 1.1-2 and "to Yahweh" in 28.1-2, Magonet proposes a similar phenomenon in v. 16: "…a company of evildoers has enclosed me, (*they have enclosed*) like a lion my hands and feet" (1994:107). "The point of mentioning hands and feet is that 'hands' for the means of defense against the enemy, the 'feet' the means of escape" (Harman 2011:220).

[42] The unexpected insertion of a 1st person singular verb interrupts the sequence of 3rd plurals (the enemies), thus grammatically highlighting the surrounded psalmist's predicament.

18.1	לָהֶם	בְגָדַי	יְחַלְקוּ		
18.2		גוֹרָל:[43]	יַפִּילוּ		וְעַל־לְבוּשִׁי
D′ e					
19.1**c**			אַל־תִּרְחָק	יְהוָה[44]	וְאַתָּה
19.2**c**			חוּשָׁה:	לְעֶזְרָתִי	אֱיָלוּתִי[45]
20.1			נַפְשִׁי	מֵחֶרֶב	הַצִּילָה
20.2	יְחִידָתִי:[46]	מִיַּד־כֶּלֶב	----------		
21.1**b**	אַרְיֵה	מִפִּי	הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי		
21.2			----------	רֵמִים	וּמִקַּרְנֵי
21.3**a**			עֲנִיתָנִי:[47]		

[43] As in the case at the close of the preceding strophe (v. 15), the psalmist concludes here with a definite anticipation of imminent death (structural *epiphora*).

[44] Another dramatic shift foregrounds the covenantal name of Israel's "Holy" God—YHWH! (cf. v. 3a). This is the first time that the psalmist appeals to this divine name in his plight. It was mentioned earlier, but sarcastically by his adversaries (v. 8a). The psalmist next praises the LORD's "name" in vv. 21-22. Already at this point in the psalm, a change in thematic direction is subtly intimated: "Whereas the psalmist had concluded that there was no one to help (v. 11), here [he] addresses God as 'my help' or 'my strength' (v. 19)" (McCann 1996:763). Further evidence of the transitional nature of strophe D' is the fact that the three verbs of final appeal in vv. 20-21 (deliver, rescue, answer) occur with a negative sense in vv. 1-10 (vv. 8, 1, 2 respectively), while the mention of "my helper" in 20.2 contrasts with "there is no one helping" in v. 11.3.

[45] "The Hebrew term *'eyalut* ['Strength'] is an unusual epithet for the deity [in fact, a *hapax legomenon*]. Some have argued that it brings out the etymology of the ordinary word for God, *'el*. It has even been suggested that the term may play on *ayeleth* in the superscription of this psalm" (Alter 2007:74; cf. Craigie 1983:197).

[46] "My only one" (or "my precious one"—in contrast to death) is an adjective used as a noun, "which in parallel with 'my *nefesh*' always refers to something like 'the only life I will ever have'" (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:222).

[47] "*You answered me.* This is how the received text reads… Because the rest of the psalm is devoted to praising rather than imploring God, perhaps the verb in the past tense is intended as a compact turning point: God has indeed answered the speaker's prayer" (Alter 2007:75). "The structure of the psalm as a whole implies that the text and meaning of MT should be retained" (Craigie 1983:197).

E d, g					
22.1	לְאֶחָי	שִׁמְךָ	אֲסַפְּרָה[48]		
22.2			אֲהַלְלֶךָּ׃[49]	קָהָל[50]	בְּתוֹךְ
23.1			| הַלְלוּהוּ	יְהוָה	יִרְאֵי[51]
23.2			כַּבְּדוּהוּ	יַעֲקֹב	כָּל־זֶרַע
23.3	כָּל־זֶרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל׃	מִמֶּנּוּ	וְגוּרוּ		
24.1			כִּי־בָזָה	לֹא	כִּי[52]

"The psalmist, perhaps in response to an oracle of salvation, affirms confidently that God has answered him, assuring him that deliverance is on the way. . . . "You have answered me" is understood as a triumphant shout which marks a sudden shift in tone and introduces the next major section of the psalm. By isolating the statement syntactically, the psalmist highlights the declaration." (NET note). The detailed *HOTTP* textual commentary agrees with this decision (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:223). "You have answered me" (עֲנִיתָנִי) triumphantly responds to "you do not answer [me]" (לֹא תַעֲנֶה) in 2.2 (a sub-*inclusio*); it corresponds to the synonymous verb "he heard" (שָׁמַע) at the end of the next strophe in 24.2 (structural *epiphora*).

[48] "'Let me sing' is a cohortative intensive in the singular, still the style of a personal prayer. 'I shall celebrate thy name' is an indicative future with a *daghesh energeticus*, which indicates an emphasis of the will in making such a decision" (Terrien 2003:233).

[49] The verb "praise (Yahweh)" (הלל) occurs cohesively in every verse of stanza E (vv. 21-26) except v. 25, where the negative-positive reasons for praise are given. "The taunts of the mockers are thus drowned out by the songs of the faithful" (VanGemeren 1991:209).

[50] "The 'congregation' [GK 7702] is here a technical term for the congregation of the righteous, which excludes that ungodly and mocking Israelites (cf. vv. 7-8). They are further identified as 'you who fear the LORD'. . . .The taunts of the mockers are now drowned out by the songs of the faithful" (VanGemeren 1994:822). The community of the godly (vv. 21-22) will always ultimately triumph over the diabolical forces of evil (vv. 12-18).

[51] The translation "fear" for this Hebrew verb is often misunderstood in English. Here the psalmist addresses fellow "devoted ones"—"Human fear brings forth not praise but abuse, but fear of the Lord is just and right, and so it begets praise, confesses love, fires the flames of charity" (Cassiodorus) (Blaising & Hardin 2008:175). "The verbs 'praise,' 'honor,' and 'revere' form the outward expression of the fear of the Lord" (VanGemeren 1994:823).

[52] Strophe E climaxes with an emphatic assertion of the "reason for praise" (כִּי) here in v. 24.

24.2	עָנִי	עֱנוּת[53]	שִׁקַּץ	וְלֹא	
24.3	מִמֶּנּוּ	פָּנָיו	־הִסְתִּיר	וְלֹא	
24.4			שָׁמֵעַ׃	אֵלָיו	וּבְשַׁוְּעוֹ
E’					
25.1	רָב	בְּקָהָל	----------	תְּהִלָּתִי	מֵאִתְּךָ[54]
25.2	יְרֵאָיו׃	נֶגֶד	אֲשַׁלֵּם		נְדָרַי
26.1		עֲנָוִים |	יֹאכְלוּ[55]		
			וְיִשְׂבָּעוּ		
26.2	דִּרְשָׁיו	יְהוָה	יְהַלְלוּ		
26.3	לָעַד׃[56]	לִבַּבְכֶם	יְחִי		
F g					
27.1			יִזְכְּרוּ		

[53] The noun-adjective (used as a noun) combination based on the same root underscores the psalmist’s prior dilemma—that is, before the Lord intervened in deliverance (cf. v. 26.1 below).

[54] Yahweh is both the source and the object of the psalmist’s “praise” (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:225); God is also the object of the psalmist’s prior vows, that is, of thanksgiving for anticipated deliverance. The noun תְּהִלָּתִי serves as the action word of this emphatic, strophe-initial verbless construction. The psalmist now joins the community of Israel in their heartfelt “praises” of Yahweh (cf. v. 4.2).

[55] Apparently, in a meaningful *play on words*, the psalmist promises that as part of his votive thank offering (Lev. 7:16-21), he will have a fellowship meal to which he will invite (formerly) afflicted folk (like him, v. 24.2), who will be able to eat their fill in honor of Yahweh (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:226; VanGemeren 1991:210).

[56] The strophe (and stanza E) concludes with a dramatic insertion of *direct speech*: “The psalmist wishes health, prosperity, happiness, for all his guests” (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:226). This wish may be a conventional expression that was used during the making of a vow—or during the meal celebrating its successful completion. In any case, “other similar statements without any introductory comment or explanation, that are in effect exclamations, occur in Psalms 31:14a; 45:6a; and 87:6b. . . . Here the use of the jussive form (*yechiy*, ‘may [your hearts] live’) may be an intentional use in order to vary the verb sequences, addressing directly the persons who have just been spoken of [to or about] in the preceding context” (Harman 2011:223)—namely, v. 25 (cf. 22-23).

	כָּל־אַפְסֵי־אָרֶץ	אֶל־יְהוָה	וְיָשֻׁבוּ [57]		
27.2[58]	כָּל־מִשְׁפְּחוֹת גּוֹיִם:	לְפָנֶיךָ[59]	וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ		
28.1		הַמְּלוּכָה	----------	לַיהוָה	כִּי[60]
28.2		בַּגּוֹיִם:	מֹשֵׁל		
F’ e					
29.1			אָכְלוּ[61]		

[57] The prefixed verbal forms of v. 27 may be understood as *jussives*, as in the NET: “Let all the peoples of the earth acknowledge the LORD and turn to him!”—with v. 28 then providing the reason (כִּי).

[58] The bicolon of v. 27 represents displays the longest poetic lines of the psalm—perhaps a phonological isomorphic equivalent that reflects the content being expressed, with reference to “the ends of the earth”! “The nations—included in the Abrahamic covenant as ‘all the families of the nations’ (Ge 12:3; Ps 96:7)—will ‘remember’…the Lord. The act of remembrance is an act of obeisance and worship” (VanGemeren 1994:823).

[59] Most versions render “before him” to stay consistent with the preceding colon’s “to Yahweh”; however, an emendation is not needed to support this translation since pronominal interchange, especially between different cola, is quite common in Hebrew poetry (*enallage*). Thus, just as there is a direct address to the assembled congregation at worship in v. 26, so also in v 27 their God, Yahweh, is addressed directly (Harman 2011:223).

[60] As in the case of strophe E, so also here in strophe F, the unit concludes with a focus on the “reason for praise” (כִּי), cf. 24.1, i.e., structural *epiphora*.

[61] This verse is typically heavily emended by scholars (e.g., Broyles 1999:122), for example, the first word from *’okhlû* (‘they shall eat’) to *’ak lô* (‘indeed, to him’, cf. BHS, RSV; VanGemeren 1991:211). However, “if this suggestion is followed, then a further emendation is required to change the following verb from being a *vav* consecutive to a simple future by deleting the initial *vav*. As eating has already been mentioned in verse 26, it seems best to retain the MT, avoiding…word division, revocalisation, and deletion” (Harman 2011:224).

And with regard to the unusual verb usage: “*Heb* ‘eat and worship.’ The verb forms (a perfect followed by a prefixed form with *vav* [ו] consecutive) are normally used in narrative to relate completed actions. Here the psalmist uses the forms rhetorically as he envisions a time when the LORD will receive universal worship” (NET note; cf. 27.1). This is just one example of how the micro-syntax of this psalm (over and above the normal poetic lexicon) is used functionally—to serve a *literary-structural purpose*, hence enhancing the text’s communicative quality and effectiveness.

	־אֶֽרֶץ	כָּל־דִּשְׁנֵי[62]	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ |		
29.2	עָפָר[63]	כָּל־יוֹרְדֵי	יִכְרְעוּ		לְפָנָיו
29.3			חָיָֽה׃	לֹֽא	וְנַפְשׁוֹ
30.1			יַעַבְדֶנּוּ		זֶֽרַע[64]
30.2	לַדּוֹר׃	לָאדֹנָי	יְסֻפַּר		
31.1			יָבֹֽאוּ		
		צִדְקָתוֹ[65]	וְיַגִּידוּ		

[62] Some commentators emend the first consonant of the verb form from *dalet* (d) to *yod* (y)—from "the fat ones" to "the sleeping ones", thus providing a close semantic and literary (i.e., phonological) parallel with the verb in the next line, "those who descend" (e.g., Craigie 1983:197); however, there is little manuscript or versional support for this change (cf. VanGemeren 1991:211 and the *Logos Lexham Interlinear Bible*).

Furthermore, we note that the general reference here is clearly to the *dead*, which may have sounded strange, perhaps even shocking to most Jewish hearers. "This inclusion of the dead among God's worshipful subjects is unusual because a reiterated theme in Psalms is that the dead, mute forever, cannot praise God. Perhaps the poet, having imagined God's dominion extending to the far ends of the earth, also wants to extend it downward—against common usage—into the very underworld" (Alter 2007:76). Such usage might be considered to be an all-inclusive *merismus*, which is quite appropriate for this climatic point in the psalmist's praise.

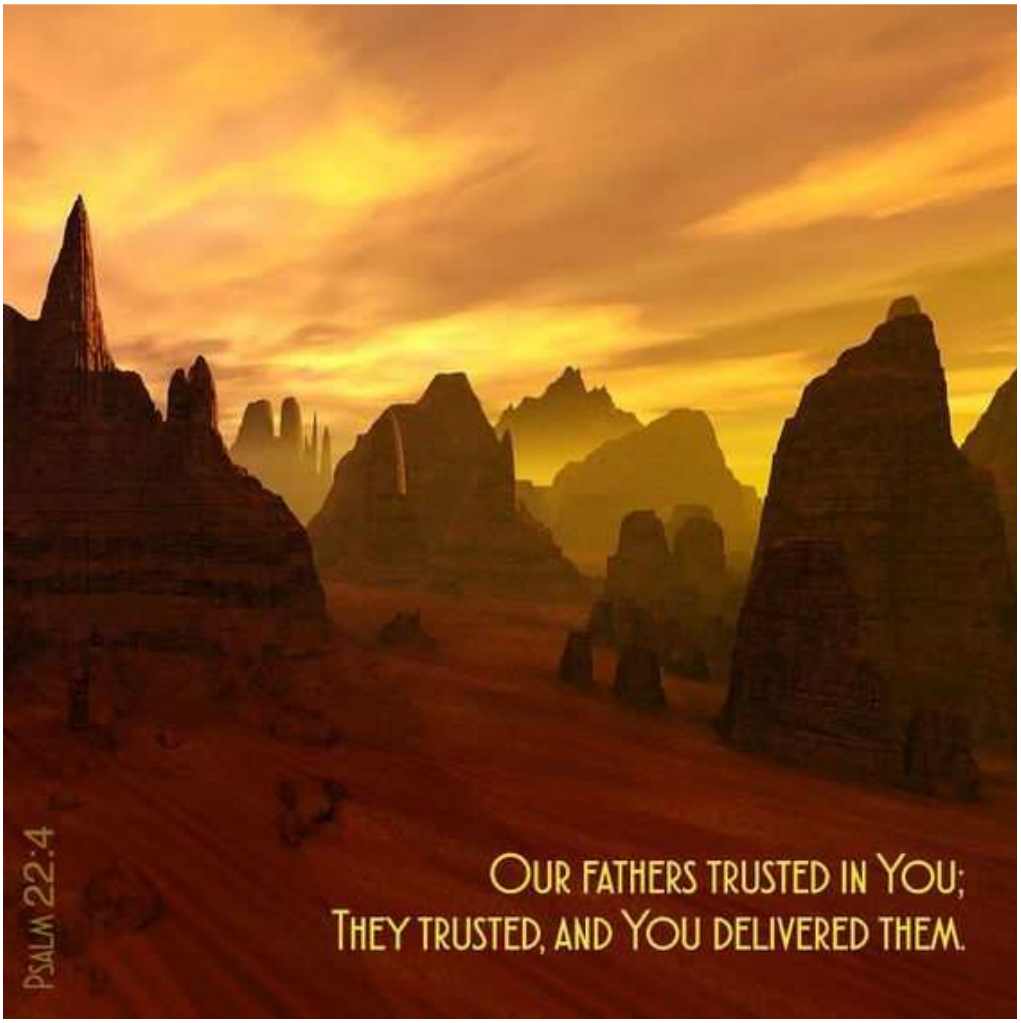
In favor of the MT, the NET (footnote) offers a reasonable explanation, which is always better than an emendation: "*Heb* 'fat [ones].' This apparently refers to those who are healthy and robust, i.e., thriving. In light of the parallelism, some prefer to emend the form to…*y'esheney*, 'those who sleep [in the earth]'; cf. **NAB**, **NRSV**), but… *dishney*, 'fat [ones]') seems to form a merism with 'all who descend into the grave' in the following line. The psalmist envisions all people, whether healthy or dying, joining in worship of the LORD."

[63] The expression 'all those descending [into the] dust' recalls the psalmist's own sad situation (v. 15.3)—an amazing reversal, but with the same God in sovereign control.

[64] Future generations join the fathers (v. 4) as the psalm draws to an all-inclusive close. "As in a medieval ballad [the final verses] sum up the poem and become the equivalent of a musical 'fugue'" (Terrien 2003:235). "Each generation will join in with the telling of the story of God's kingship (cf. vv. 3-5) and will add what God has done for them. This is the essence of redemptive history" (VanGemeren 1994:823)—one that climaxes at the Cross (cf. Mt. 27:39-46; Mk. 15:29-34).

[65] "In this context 'righteousness' has the idea of 'salvation', 'deliverance'" (Harman 2011:224; cf. VanGemeren 1994:823).

31.2**b**				נוֹלָד	לְעַם
			עָשָׂה׃[66]		כִּי



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[66] "Neither the subject nor the object are expressed in the Hebrew text, but the preceding references to the way in which the Lord heard the cry of the psalmist makes it plain that it is the deliverance by the LORD that is in view" (Harman 2011:224). "*For he has done*. The abruptness reflects the Hebrew. What God has done, in any case, would have to be His bounty or kindnesses (Hebrew *tsedaqot*) to those who fear Him" (Alter 2007:77)—more specifically, "his deliverance/righteousness" in v. 31.1—with reference to Yahweh's saving actions that vindicate his people, the oppressed in particular. The LXX makes the subject explicit, viz. "what *the Lord* has done" (Craigie 1983:197). GNT reflects the concluding emphasis of the Hebrew by rendering the final clause in direct speech: "The LORD saved his people," which would certainly be appropriate in this context (strophe F').

7. Discerning the macro-structure of Psalm 22

The following discussion summarizes the main items of linguistic-literary[67] evidence which serve to substantiate the segmentation of the text of Psalm 22 that has been proposed above. In one way or another, these features all have to do with the manifestation of varied aspects of *continuity* and/or *discontinuity* in the discourse (as described above) to mark the distinct structural boundaries that have been posited. The primary feature of *recursion* is usually complemented by other poetic devices, as these interact with each other on several levels of verbal organization. I will begin with the largest, most inclusive compositional units and work down the organizational hierarchy to those which group together the smallest set of poetic lines above the verse/bicolon level, i.e., poetic paragraphs, or "strophes."

Psalm 22, over and above its prominent theological content, is a literary masterpiece—an artistically interwoven composite of the four foundational types of liturgical material to be found in the Psalter: complaint (lament), petition (prayer), profession of trust (creed), and praise (with or without included thanksgiving). The most obvious and principal break in the text occurs between verses 21 and 22. Here we intuitively experience a fundamental shift in psychological orientation, from an introverted mournful lament over surrounding enemies to a joyous communal celebration of the righteous rule of Yahweh, which embraces all people and extends over the entire earth. This dramatic alteration is perspective is highlighted by a number of important poetic techniques, thus evincing a notable instance of stylistic "convergence."

a The most prominent structural marker of the major division (if allowed)[68] is the emphatic monocolon of *closure* in 21.3: "You have answered me!" This is a cry of faith which so strongly anticipates a positive response from the LORD to the preceding pleas

[67] The term "literary" designates those structural elements that involve deliberate patterning, especially those created by significant instances of recursion.

[68] This interpretation and the consequent effect on translation is in dispute. It is supported by Craigie, among others: "The perfect tense (of the verb עֲנִיתָנִי) expresses the worshiper's confidence…based on his faith that God would answer his prayers…" (1983:200).

(especially those expressed in vv. 19-21) that one can assume that the deed is already done![69] This forward-looking affirmation also acts as a transitional bridge, or structural "hinge," between what we might (for lack of a better poetic term) simply call "parts" One and Two of the psalm. It thus initiates the song of thanksgiving in which the singer-prayer, together with his fellow-worshipers, commemorate some gracious act of deliverance of Yahweh on behalf of his people, whether an individual or a group.

b The exclamation "You have *answered* me!" (21.3) also links up with the other principal borders of Psalm 22. This occurs by way of contrast with its beginning, "you have abandoned me!" (עֲזַבְתָּנִי, 1.1, i.e., *inclusio*) and "you do not *answer*" (וְלֹא תַעֲנֶה, 2.2, another *inclusio*). There is a corresponding connection with the onset of "cycle" one, stanza C: "Indeed (climactic כִּי), there is no helper!" (11.3, i.e., *anaphoric aperture*). On the other hand, an idea similar to 21.3 is reaffirmed at the very end of the psalm in the words, "For/indeed (כִּי), he has done [it]!" (31.2, i.e., structural *epiphora*). Another inclusion between the onset and conclusion of Part One is formed through repetition of the key verb "deliver": "from my *deliverance*" (מְּישׁוּעָתִי) in 1.2 and "*deliver* me" (הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי) in 21.1.

One will notice that what has been posited as the two main "parts" of Psalm 22 are unbalanced in terms of length—the first "half" roughly twice as long as the second in terms of lexical units (see below). This would lead us to look for an appropriate break in the initial section—not that another major division has to be there (i.e., for the sake of structural "balance"), but simply as a check to make sure one way or the other. In this case we might apply the phonemic principle of "pressure toward *symmetry* in the system." Thus, a potential place to consider as a possible boundary would be the section-initial

[69] Craigie offers a liturgical explanation for this unusual structure: The assertion "You have answered me" "was elicited by the oracular statement declared by a priest (or perhaps by a prophet) that God would answer. The oracular proclamation presupposed by this statement of confidence is implied, not stated; presumably it could not be stated in the text of the liturgy, for the officiating priest (or prophet) would be waiting for the divine word and would proclaim only the divine word that was given to him" (1983:200).

passage that has already been shown to have a connection with the principal break between verses 21 and 22, namely, the beginning of stanza C in v. 11.

Colon 10.2 was designated as the close of cycle one, stanza B' because of the repetition of the crucial reference to deity, "my God" (אֱלִי), followed by the emphatic pronoun "you" (אַתָּה) in utterance-final position (1.1/10.2, *inclusio*). This feature calls attention to another important methodological procedure: The diverse units of discourse must never be analyzed in isolation from one another. Instead, there should be a constant *interplay*—a continual shifting of one's analytical attention back and forth between the different levels of structure and their respective constituents. The external boundaries of one segment tend to harmonize with those postulated for another, whether the latter happens to be an internal, an incorporating, or a syntagmatically adjacent or parallel unit. In addition, we normally find that the end, or closing boundary of unit A will coincide with the beginning, or onset of unit B, the two borders thus reinforcing one another. At the end of a careful literary-structural analysis then, we observe that a widely recognized biblical pericope, such as a psalm, generally turns out to be a *unified*, well-integrated *whole*—not a mélange of textual bits and pieces, all rather clumsily cobbled together by some incompetent scribe or redactor from a collection or assortment of "sources."

c Returning to verse 11, a closer examination reveals another important correspondence, one that also in "Janus," hinge-like fashion has links in both textual directions (i.e., anaphorically and cataphorically).[70] This mournful plea, "Do not be far

[70] Indeed, in many translations (e.g., NIV) and commentaries (e.g., Bratcher & Reyburn 1994:212), v. 11 is construed as the *close* of Cycle 1 (stanzas A + B), rather than the beginning of Cycle 2 (stanzas C + D), for example: "The prayer moves through two cycles (vv. 1-11 and 12-19), each concluding in the petition, "be not far" (vv. 11, 19)" (Mays 1994:107). I am construing the notion of the psalmist being "far away" from God as marking the *onset* of three major units, stanza A (v. 1), stanza C (v. 11), and stanza D' (v. 19). Even in Mays' analysis, v. 19 is not a "concluding" verse (ibid.:110). Bratcher & Reyburn regard v. 11 as a "transition" within the text (1994:213).

from me!" (11.1) clearly reflects the psalmist's initial moan (שַׁאֲגָתִי, lit. 'roar'):[71] "My God, my God, why…are you so far from my deliverance (יִשׁוּעָתִי)?" (1.1-2, i.e., *anaphora*, note also the phonological rhyme). There is also a connection with the psalmist's final, extended appeal which begins at 19.1: "But you, O Yahweh, do not stay far away!" (אַל-תִּרְחָק; i.e., another instance of structural *anaphora*, which distinguishes the two complementary prayers from the included lamentation of vv. 12-18). Yet another reinforcing link between the two strophe-initial verses 11 and 19, the second "half" of Part One, is manifested by the connotatively contrastive references to the concept "help": "Indeed, there is no *helper*!" (עוֹזֵר—11.3), a *complaint* and "O my Strength, hurry *to help me*!" (לְעֶזְרָתִי—19.2), an *appeal*.

d There is another, somewhat less significant piece of evidence to support the positing of a major division between verses 10 and 11. This is debatable because it is based on my construal of the organization of the cola of Psalm 22, namely, the number of poetic lines that constitute a given section. It is interesting to observe that the total for each "third" of the whole composition (including the heading), verses 1-10, 11-21, and 22-32, turns out to be roughly the same: 24, 28, and 25 lines, or cola respectively. The number of constituent "words" per cycle gradually increases in size, approximately (*depending on how one counts lexical units*) 79, 83, and 91 words. Structurally, then, the three sections rather closely approximate one another with respect to "poetic length," thus giving an impression of balance as the psalmist develops his heart-felt thoughts in prayer to the Lord. All of the strophes of Part One begin with some sort of a conjunctive particle except the two that comprise stanza C, both of which are asyndetic.

e Part One of Psalm 22 is segmented into what we might term "cycles" (for lack of a better term)—that is, a pairing of related stanzas, designated as (A—A') + (B—B') // (C—C') + (D—D') on the structural chart above. Part Two of the psalm consists of cycle 3: (E—E') + (F—F'). Cycle 2 of Part One, as we will see, represents a thematic and emotive

[71] "[The] cry of supplication, 'Do not stay far away from me!'…is no longer the question of 'Why?' but the cry of a child who still hopes" (Terrien 2003:232). "The word 'far'…helps to maintain the sense of isolation throughout the psalm" (Harman 2011:216)—to be more specific, within Part One.

intensification of cycle one, in several ways: the human source of the poet's grief is more graphically described (vv. 12-13, 16-18); the expression of his own physical and psychological reactions is magnified (vv. 14-15); his personal appeal to Yahweh is made more verbally concrete and concentrated (vv. 19-21). The explicit heightening observed in cycle 2 thus follows the general tendency of Hebrew verse to manifest a sharpening of semantic focus and/or a strengthening in the affective impression that is conveyed by the (B) half of a parallel bicolon (Alter 1985:615).

Moving down to the next lower level of poetic organization, we come to the "stanza" unit of structure. A consideration of the content as well as the form of Psalm 22 indicates a very symmetrical manner of construction. There are six compound stanzas in all, four in Part One (two per cycle), and another pair in the Part Two. Each stanza consists of two "strophes," or poetic paragraphs, e.g., A + A', B + B', etc.[72] With one significant exception, the sequence of stanzas in Part One reveals an alternating illocutionary movement, which produces a doubly twofold pattern that relates to the author's primary communicative intentions and associated personal feelings. Thus, there is an initial "complaint" describing his desperate situation followed by either an implicit or explicit "appeal" (based on trust) to Yahweh for deliverance. This pragmatic framework of Part One may be summarized as follows:

Stanza/Cycle	**Complaint**	**Appeal**
A + A'	1-2	3-5
B + B'	6-8	9-10
C + C'	11-13	*14-15**
D + D'	16-18	19-21

[72] Terrien, too, finds an artistic balance that runs throughout Psalm 22: "Structural analysis…reveals a remarkable symmetry of strophic continuity. . . . The strophic analysis appears to support the unity of composition for the whole psalm" (2003:229-230).

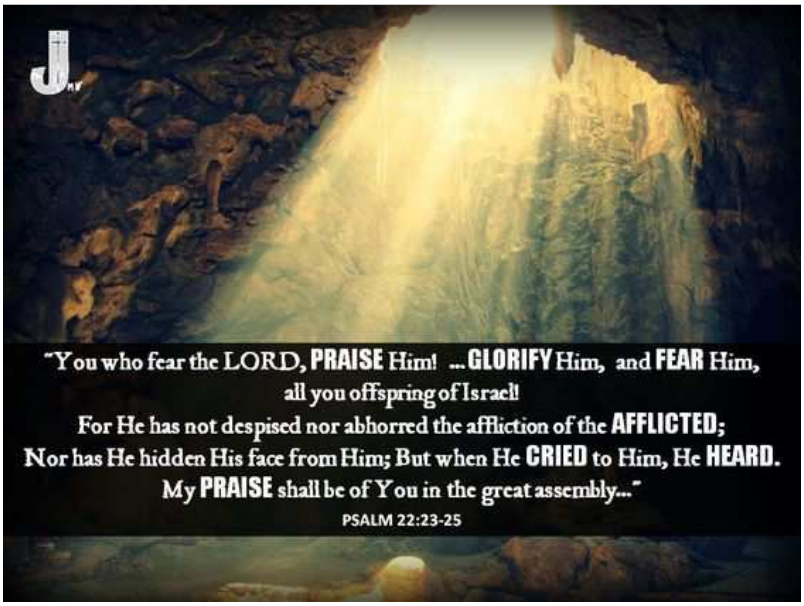
This succession of strophes may also reflect a subtly alternating shift in perspective, that is, from an inward to an outward point of view, thus, *internal*: strophes A, B', C', D'; *external*: strophes A', B, C, D. The proposed boundaries for these four stanzas and their constituent strophes will be further justified when the psalm's microstructure is examined more closely below.

f The exception noted in verses 14-15 represents a deliberate alternation in the established pattern. Here the expected "appeal" is replaced by another "complaint," one that is foregrounded by the psalmist's graphic description of his physical and mental anguish that is coupled with a stark depiction of his felt proximity to death. One senses a note of hopeless resignation in his words, especially in the final climactic utterance: "Surely (*waw*-emphatic), to the very dust of death you are depositing me!" (וְלַעֲפַר־מָוֶת תִּשְׁפְּתֵנִי) (15.3). There is a certain irony here: the God whom the psalmist feels is too far away (v. 11) is close enough to lay him in the grave! The actual position of this exclamation may be significant by virtue of its position within the psalm, viz., at its virtual "midpoint" with three stanzas on either side (36 versus 39 cola).

The fact that structural centers are often important in Hebrew poetic construction would lead one to check to see whether there might be any special communicative significance at this juncture in the text. In relation to its cotext, it may be suggested that these two verses (14-15) represent the emotive and spiritual nadir of Psalm 22. As reflected in the intense physically-based imagery, the poet was almost completely played out at this point (*though he could at least still verbalize his feelings despite his tongue sticking to the roof of his mouth!*). He suddenly turns upon Yahweh in direct address, seemingly accusing him of permanently sealing his fate on account of his failure to act in his behalf. The general complaint that "There is surely no helper!" at the end of the preceding stanza (כִּי־אֵין עוֹזֵר) (11.3, i.e., structural *epiphora*), is here bitterly sharpened into a specific charge against Yahweh—that his God was laying him in the grave! The psalmist could descend no lower in his faith, either for the present or for any possible future; all hope was seemingly gone. Perhaps it was in order to distinguish this crucial segment in his lament that the pray-er decided to alter its regular thematic arrangement, shifting from

the expected plea for help to the expression of a grievance that is Job-like in its grim pessimism (cf. Job 10:9; 30:23).

g The two binary stanzas that constitute the strongly optimistic Part Two of Psalm 22 are likewise quite clearly demarcated, namely, vv. 22-26 (E + E') and 27-31 (F + F'). The ethnic vision of worshipful commendation of the LORD that is expressed in stanza E is progressively amplified in order to accommodate the whole world in stanza F. Thus, references to "my brothers in the congregation [of]…the seed of Jacob/Israel" (vv. 22-23) lead off the former unit, while the onset of the latter section is distinguished by a greatly expanded human scope, including "all the ends of the earth" and "all the families of the nations" (v. 27, i.e., structural *anaphora* with vv. 22 and 25). Correspondingly, the joyous with that concludes stanza E: "May your hearts live forever!" (יְחִי לְבַבְכֶם לָעַד) (26.3) is complemented by an enthusiastic affirmation of a divine guarantee at the close of stanza F: "Indeed, he has done [it]!" (כִּי עָשָׂה) (31.2, i.e., structural *epiphora*). In this connection, it is interesting to observe that each of the six stanzas seems to end on an emphatic note; in addition to E and F just mentioned, there is A: "…and they were not ashamed!" (5.2); B: "Indeed, there is no helper!" (11.3); C: "Yes, in the dust of death you are depositing me!" (15:3); D: "You have answered me!" (21.3).



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8. A summary of the structural evidence

As suggested above, each of the six putative "stanzas" that have been delineated may be further segmented into "strophes," or poetic paragraphs, which are the smallest structural division above the colon complex, or poetic "line" (consisting of a bi-/tri-colon). Psalm 22 is thus composed of *12 strophes* which function in a dual capacity, namely, to mutually define one another within the wider discourse and hence also to help demarcate the larger units (e.g., stanzas) into which they have been incorporated. A number of the key strophic signals in this psalm have already been pointed out. The remaining *structural markers* are summarized below in the sequential order in which they appear. Not every literary (artistic-rhetorical) feature in the text is included in this description—only those which are most prominent and have greater significance with reference to the overall compositional organization.

It is important to recognize the linguistic *diversity* that is revealed in this overview, a literary phenomenon that has two major implications—one extrinsic and the other intrinsic to the biblical text. The first principle pertains to *procedure*, suggesting the unreliability of any approach which depends largely upon a single literary feature or diagnostic technique (e.g., meter, repetition, *inclusio*, etc.) to describe the intricacies of the discourse structure of a poetic work. Rather, all of the rhetorical devices found to be present in the text must be interpreted together, in relation to one another, in order to offer a balanced and mutually corrective perspective on the whole. And secondly with respect to *appreciation* or assessment, we observe that the essential *unity* of an admirable literary work, like Psalm 22, is realized on all layers of verbal composition by its varied combination of artistic qualities, which manifests different aspects of formal as well as semantic continuity and/or discontinuity (*as discussed earlier*). This is yet another fact that attests to the exceptional literary expertise of its original author. He (*presumably, in view of the culture and age concerned*) was not only a perceptive theologian and a sincere worshiper of Yahweh; indeed, it is evident that he was also one of ancient Israel's most eloquent poets.

8.1 Psalm 22: *PART ONE*

Stanza/Strophe *Literary-Structural Markers*

A Throughout Part One of the psalm, the strophes correspond to the pragmatic divisions presented above; that is, they match the alternating units of "complaint" and "appeal." The beginning of this poetic prayer is announced in dramatic fashion by the reiterated, hence intensively personified *vocative* call, "My God!" (אֵלִי).[73] This introduces a *rhetorical question* which dramatizes the issue of *theodicy* that dominates the first half of the psalm: "Why have you abandoned me?" (i.e., *you should not have treated your servant so!*). The pronominal ending –iy (ִי – "me/my") sound appears eight times in the initial strophe to give it phonological cohesion as well as to accentuate the pathetic plight of the poet. These reiterated first-person references also highlight the *irony* of the situation: how could such an afflicted individual presume to call out, "*my* God"? After yet another resounding vocative, אֱלֹהַי, the crucial notion of "separation" is continued, with the addition of the concept of time (v. 2, a *merismus*) to that of space (v. 1) to reinforce the idea of completeness—the gap was indeed great! This, in turn, underscores the "no-answer" (a repeated "no!" לֹא) which is the only response that the "non-silent" suppliant receives to the many pleas to his God (לִי… אֵלִי – phonic *inclusio*).

A' The topical focus suddenly shifts by way of contrast from the first to the second person singular pronoun to signal the onset of the second strophe: וְאַתָּה "But you…" (3.1). This emphasis upon the sovereign, divine "you" continues, as three more lines in succession are initiated with a pronominal reference to the trustworthy Lord, Yahweh: בָּךְ (4.1), אֵלֶיךָ (5.1), בָּךְ (5.2). These assertions are further conjoined by a common syntactic pattern: *Adjunct* (prep./'you') + *Verb* (reason) + *Verb* (result). A final switch from the prevailing optimistic pattern to a negative (yet still connotatively positive) with the last verb indicates a closure of the strophe as well as the stanza (A): "…and they were

[73] A double vocative like this indicates a close personal relationship, e.g., Genesis 22:11 (Abraham), Exodus 3:4 (Moses), 2 Samuel 19:4 (Absalom), 2 Kings 2:12 (Elijah). "Notice that in declaring his right to say 'my God,' the figure speaks not of his own acts or character or status but only of God and what God has done" (Mays 1994:109).

not ashamed/disappointed," which reflects, but this time in topical contrast with, the negatives that conclude the preceding strophe. This final verb, בָּוֹשׁוּ, phonologically recalls the initial description of Yahweh: קָדֹוֹשׁ יֹושֵׁב "(you are) holy, seated/enthroned (*inclusio*). Three repetitions of the key verb/concept "they trusted," בָּטְחוּ, along with the recurrent word-final pronominal marker "they" (-וּ) contributes to this strophe an additional correspondence in both sense and sound. The prayerful "cry" of Israel's fathers was based on "trust" and it resulted in "deliverance"—not "shame"! "Having God as 'my God' rests first of all on belonging to a community for whom the center of all reality is 'the holy one' who is enthroned as king in heavenly and earthly temple…and whose acts of salvation are the content of Israel's hymns of praise" (Mays 1994:108).

B Another emphatic pronoun, וְאָנֹכִי "I/me" (6.1) announces the onset of the initial strophe of a new stanza. This contrasts with the divine "you" of 3.1 (*anaphora*) and coincides with a temporal shift back to the present time of praying. This self-reference is pejoratively heightened by means of a syntactic juxtaposition with the connotatively opposing nouns "worm" and "man." Conceptual coherence for this unit is provided by a string of terms selected from the semantic field of denigration: "reproach," "despised," "mocked," etc. A profound sense of self-rejection (v. 6), exacerbated by social rejection (vv. 7-8), is the apparent consequence of divine rejection (v. 1)—or so the psalmist perceives his situation. This depreciatory sequence reaches its emotive climax in the concluding segment of *direct speech*, provocatively set in the mouths of his enemies (v. 9). This utterance features a chiastic verbal pattern that divides the quotation and foregrounds the two focal participants:

a *he* relied on **Yahweh** (motivation)
  b let **Him** deliver *him* (invocation)
  b' let **Him** rescue *him* (invocation)
a' for **He** delights in *him* (motivation)

These strophe-final references to "reliance" and "rescue" constitute an ironic echo of the corresponding notions found at the close of the preceding unit (v. 6, i.e., contrastive *epiphora*). In this case, the actual "trust" (expectation) is that Yahweh will *not* act to

deliver the believer. Nevertheless, these words of the enemies, whether real or conjectured, do in fact bear negative testimony to the psalmist's close relationship to his God.

B' A striking pronominal switch coupled with an asseverative conjunction, "Surely you…" (כִּי־אַתָּה), again leads the new strophe off with a contrastive personal reference (9.1, *anaphora*). An extended lexical introversion, which includes some consonance (i.e., *m/b/t* sounds) and assonance (in *–iy*), forms the conceptual backbone of this unit. The carefully constructed sequence also accents the closeness of the fatherly, yet also the "motherly," (covenantal) relationship that once existed between the plaintiff-psalmist and his (lit. 'my') "God" (cf. 1.1):[74]

a Surely **you**
b the one who drew me forth
c from the womb
d the one giving me assurance
e upon the breasts of ***my mother***
e' upon **you**
d' I was cast (i.e., in trust)
c' from the womb, from the womb of *my mother*
b' my God
a' (are) **you**!

The repetition of "you" (2ms) at the beginning, middle, and end of this construction creates a thematic "projection" that focuses again upon the divine addressee of the psalmist's prayer. The psalmist's fervent "statements about God are confessions of faith, of confidence in God. But in the prayer they serve also as complaints, as panels of contrast to the figure's present situation" (Mays 1994:109).

[74] "This individual relationship is described by the use of a metaphor that portrays God in the role of a human father who takes the child as it comes from the womb, lays it on its mother's breast to be nursed, and thereafter furnishes the environment of provision and security in which live is lived" (Mays 1994:109).

C However, with a further touch of pathetic *irony*, the preceding positive affirmation of faith leads directly back to the central notion of perceived separation and the appellant's grave perplexity concerning a God who is "far away" when trouble is "nearby" (v. 11; cf. v. 1, *anaphora*). Thus, the opening staccato *tricolon* (11.1-2-3) contrasts in form (2 + 2 + 2, three "words" per colon) as well as in content with the preceding poetic material. Several other prominent markers of aperture that converge to clearly indicate the beginning of this new strophe/stanza/cycle have already been pointed out.

A shocking new image in *rhyme* then confronts the poet and his audience alike to develop the theme that "trouble is near": the psalmist is "surrounded" by פָּרִ֗ים רַבִּ֫ים "many bulls" (12.1; cf. 16.1, *anaphora*).[75] The author's human enemies (vv. 6-7) are thus metaphorically transformed into raging beasts as they suddenly appear on the lyric scene to attack him with increased ferocity.[76] Another structural reversal highlights this structural *aperture*:[77]

a they have surrounded me
  b many bulls
  b' the strong ones (i.e., bulls) of Bashan
a' they have encircled me.

[75] The pairing of oxen and lions are a conventional pairing that represents the epitome of brute force and fearsomeness, while "hounds and hunters (vv. 16, 20) evoke the helpless prey. . . . Perhaps the metaphors give these enemies a demonic cast; in the ancient Near Eastern religions, demons and divine figures often appear as animals" (Mays 1994:110). "Such metaphors…serve to engage the mind and to stir emotions" (Harman 2011:219). They also suggest that "the powers of evil are unleashed against the psalmist so as to make it appear that the only possible consequence is death" (McCann 1996:763).

[76] In the laments such as Ps. 22, "the enemies are described in rather general ways and are thus difficult to identify with any specificity. In additions, the identity of the enemies varies from psalm to psalm" (Bellinger 1990:53). This generality of reference makes it possible for believers of every age to imagine their own particular foes as they pray the words of this psalm.

[77] "Chiasmus is one of the syntactic techniques in Hebrew poetry for marking stanza boundaries" (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:219).

The strophe closes with an even more vicious scene, one that is augmented by vocal assonance: אַרְיֵה טֹרֵף וְשֹׁאֵג “a lion ripping and roaring” (13.2). The strophe-final verb “roar” recalls the psalmist’s own “roaring” (שַׁאֲגָתִי) in response to his dire predicament (1.2, i.e., a paronomastic *inclusio*).

C’ The preceding external, bestial imagery is unexpectedly altered to that depicting the internal distress that is seemingly associated with a severe physical ailment. Thus, the psalmist turns from the threatening enemy without to that within as he introspectively struggles to deal with his own inner physical pain and psychological stress (vv. 14-15). Matters appear to get even worse as liquid images (“water” and “wax”) paradoxically merge with those of extreme dryness and thirst, which reach their emotive peak (his mental cellar) in the “dust of death” (וְלַעֲפַר־מָוֶת) at the close of the strophe/stanza (15.3). Another prominent lexical string that lends supportive cohesion to this segment involves various references to the sufferer’s internal organs: “my bones …heart…bowels…tongue …palate.” The pointed juxtaposition of the pronouns “you—subject,” i.e., Yahweh, and “me—object” (תִּשְׁפְּתֵנִי) as the strophe terminates brings together the central protagonists in this deeply religious drama of life and death. The psalmist echoes Job as he appears to hold God responsible for his perilous plight!

D This fourth stanza begins in almost the same way as the preceding one, namely, with a vivid portrayal of the enemies “surrounding” the suppliant (16.1-2; cf. 12.1-2, i.e., structural *anaphora*). But this time the horror of the psalmist’s situation is intensified (including an initial כִּי “Yes, indeed…”) as the adversaries are referred to as spatially near, but ritually impure “dogs” (כְּלָבִים). Another chiasmus, exactly parallel to that of 12.1-2, serves to reinforce the drama of this scene:

a they have surrounded me
    b dogs
    b’ a pack of wicked ones
a’ they have hemmed me in.

A corresponding circular construction concludes the strophe (18.1-2) with a description of the enemy now shamefully invading the psalmist's very person. This may in fact be a gloomy allusion to his own imminent demise, which he thus views as having already taken place:

a they divide
  b my garments among them
  b' and for my clothing
a' they cast a lot.

At the midpoint of the strophe (17.1) there is a brief and unexpected shift in the grammatical subject sequence from "they" to "I (count)" (אֲסַפֵּר), as the poet sadly contemplates his miserable condition. Supportive phonological connectivity within this unit is maintained by the continual alternation between *–uw* ("they") and *i/ay* (me/my) inseparable pronouns, a combination that mimics the pathetic participant who is being poetically depicted.

D' An emphatic shift to "you—sg." (וְאַתָּה) with reference to Yahweh, coupled with the central motif of "separation," recalls the first strophe of Part One (cf. v. 11, *inclusio*) and here also begins its final strophe (אַל־תִּרְחַק יְהוָה/ מְיִשׁוּעָתִי, vv. 1.2/19.1, i.e., *anaphora*). This contrastive aperture initiates a series of petitionary verbs that plea to the LORD for "help" (לְעֶזְרָתִי, 19.2; cf. עוֹזֵר, 11.3): "do not be distant…hurry… deliver…save me." The extended prayer sequence is forcefully and somewhat surprisingly concluded (*as noted earlier*) by the plaintiff's proclamation: "you have answered me" (עֲנִיתָנִי) in v. 21.3 (cf. 2.2, a *perfect* tense of anticipated prophetic fulfillment).[78] This verb thus foregrounds in an extraordinary way the onset of the psalm's second "half" (Part Two) through a clear

[78] This interpretation is supported by Magonet; also "Despite the abruptness, this [verb] effectively forms a bridge to the third part of the psalm which is a hymn of praise to God" (1994:108). And this section (Part Two) does not appear to be a separate psalm that has simply been scribally cobbled on to the close of the preceding unit (v. 21), for "there are again a number of linkages with earlier parts of the Psalm. . . . [For example], in verse 18 [17] he 'counted' his bones, in verse 23 [22] he will 'recount' God's name, i.e., praise God, and this will happen in future generations as well (v. 31 [30]), 'it will be told', *y'suppar*" (Magonet 1994:109).

foreshadowing of its second thematic division (cf. 24.4, 31.1, i.e., corresponding *epiphora*).

To further underscore the significance of this conclusion, the psalmist makes mention again of the human "beasts" from whom he is requesting his God for deliverance: the "dog" (כֶּלֶב), the "lion" (אַרְיֵה), and the wild oxen (רֵמִים)[79]—in reverse order now from their introduction earlier in this cycle (20.2, 21.1-2; cf. 12.1, 13.2, 16.1). In this final strophe, the poetic appellant masterfully fuses together the two principal themes of his petition, namely, his *separation* from a God who seems far away in contrast to his *proximity* to a multitude of formidable foes. On the other hand, the seed of his hoped-for salvation has been planted in the very verbs that he prays, confidently trusting now that his God would "come quickly" to "deliver" him (1.2, 2.2 // 19.2, 20.1), thus not "despising" his "afflicted one" (vv. 6, 8; cf. 24). This implicit faith provides an impressive close to a powerfully expressed lament to the LORD. In the great conceptual gap between verses 21 and 22, then, the psalmist either assumes a scenario in which Yahweh actually did come to his aid or he strongly anticipates such a saving outcome, which in turn motivates his thankful response in Part Two.

8.2 Psalm 22: *PART TWO*

Stanza/Strophe *Literary-Structural Markers*

E This second major portion of the psalm leads off with an intensive form that introduces a new poetic genre and sets the tone for all of the words that follow.[80] It is a

[79] "The Hebrew term **רֵמִים** (*remim*) appears to be an alternate spelling of **רְאֵמִים** (*r e'emim*, "wild oxen"; see **BDB** 910 s.v. **רְאֵם**)"—NET footnote.

[80] The sudden, commentator-confounding shift in topic and tone that occurs here at the onset of Part Two (stanza E) is not an uncommon feature of "lament" psalms. This conceptual gap-spanning movement significantly illustrates the *chesed*-based covenantal (*birith*) relationship that binds believers with their LORD. Thus, there is "the emergence of a remarkable outburst of praise from a covenantal appeal as though the prayer were already answered (see Pss. 6, 13, 22, 28, 31, 54, 56, 57, 69, 71, 85, 109). It is not however, that the circumstance has changed [not necessarily—not unless prayed retrospectively]; the individual has changed. The prayer of faith has brought him [her] into an experiential connection with

cohortative verb (אֲסַפְּרָה) that emphasizes the speaker's determination or resolution to perform the action expressed. Thus, in sharp contrast to the mournful complaints and desperate appeals that characterize Part One, here the psalmist starts off with an optimistic assertion: "Let me proclaim (or, 'I will surely declare') your name to my brothers…" (22.1). This self-imperative to praise Yahweh is reiterated in chiastic form to suggest the completeness of the verbal action involved, and well as the corporate solidarity and full participation of all those concerned:[81]

a Let me proclaim your name
  b to my brothers
  b' among the assembly
a' I will praise you!

The circle of agents who are active in this acclaim is then widened considerably in the subsequent chiasmus, which features a reversal in the structural position of the doers and their deeds, thereby reinforcing the implication of total harmony and mutual engagement:

a all the seed of Jacob
  b glorify him
  b' and reverence him
a' all the seed of Israel!

A series of verbs from the semantic set of commendation (giving vocal expression to the "fear of the LORD" [יִרְאֵי יְהוָה], 23.1) lends cohesion to the initial part of the strophe. This same compositional function is performed in the latter portion by a similar negative (לְא) punctuated progression that enunciates the reason for such an enthusiastic celebration

God's love [*chesed*], and it is here that faith blossoms into joy, irrespective of what the prevailing circumstances might be" (Jacoby 2013:78; material in brackets added).

[81] "The group who celebrate [the psalmist's] deliverance with him have a theological spiritual identity. They are not simply family, friends, and neighbors, a company constituted by natural and accidental relations. They are brothers (v. 22) in a religious sense" (Mays 1994:111).

of Yahweh: "he has *not* despised…he has *not* hated…he *has* not hidden from…but he has heard (the suffering afflicted ones)" (v. 24).[82] It almost sounds as if the poet wishes to contradict all of the pessimistic assumptions that he uttered at this psalm's beginning (vv. 1-2). A switch to an affirmative assertion at the very end (שָׁמֵֽעַ) draws the intensive sequence, as well as the strophe itself, to a satisfying close (24.4, a relatively rare *tetracolon*). This verb synonymously echoes both the climactic resolution of Part One (21.3, i.e., *epiphora*) and also reaffirms a corresponding set of historically based actions at the end of stanza one (A', vv. 4-5, but with an inverted patter of negative and positive verbs).

E' Another emphatic "you-sg." form (מֵֽאִתְּךָ) in reference to Yahweh (topic focus) marks the commencement of the second strophe of this stanza (25.1, i.e., *anaphora* with 3.1, 9.1, 19.1). The initial line continues with strong anaphoric links to the preceding strophe: "my praise in the great assembly" (22.2) and "his fearers/those fearing him" (23.1). The psalmists' own worship now blends in with the congregation of "Israel" as a whole (cf. 3.2). Following the topical pattern of strophe E, a further reference to the downtrodden is made in an apparent play on two possible senses of the same root: "the humble ones" (עֲנָוִים) of 26.1 and "the afflicted ones" (עָנִי) of 24.2. The strophe/stanza comes to a rousing close in a double expression of rejoicing: First, the pious are exhorted to "praise Yahweh" (יְהַלְלוּ יְהוָה, 26.2), a phrase that recalls similar words at the stanza's beginning (22.2-23.1, i.e., *inclusio*). This is followed by an optative exclamation—a distinctive *monocolon*—that invokes Yahweh's eternal blessings upon his people: "May your (pl.) hearts live forever!" (26.3; cf. the other concluding monocola in 21.3 and 31.2). This entire stanza (E), with its stress on lauding the LORD for deliverance received, stands in joyous contrast to the psalm's opening strophe (A), where the poet was contemplating his personal crisis from the opposite side of the fence, as it were.

[82] The psalmist "is by self-understanding and confession one of the lowly, an *'ani*. It is not his affliction that has made him a lowly one; rather, he has undergone his affliction as one of the lowly" (Mays 1994:112)—one of the God-"fearers" (25.2). It is possible, as in GNT, to construe vv. 23-24 as the content of the psalmist's "praise" (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:224).

F A double verb construction announces the onset of this new strophe and stanza: "They will *remember* and they will *return*…" (27.1). The subject, initially presumed to be the faithful of Israel "seeking (Yahweh)" from 26.2, remarkably turns out to be "all the ends of the earth," that is, "all of the families of nations" (27.1-2). This represents a considerable expansion of thematic scope, implying a mass conversion (lit. "turning") to Yahweh from among the Gentile (non-Jewish) nations.[83] An *inclusio* demarcates the boundaries of this short panegyric unit, which ends with a verbless emphatic assertion in v. 29.1-2: "Truly (כִּי), to Yahweh (belongs) the dominion—(he is the) one ruling over the nations!"

F' As in the case of v. 27, so also in v. 29 (an instance of structural *anaphora*) a double-verb linkage opens this new strophe, literally: "They have eaten and they have bowed down…"[84] Yahweh's worshipers will include the rich (lit., "all [the] fat ones of [the] earth") as well as the poor (lit., "all [the] ones going down [into the] dust), which constitutes a figurative *merismus* that embraces all people. The latter expression is expanded by "even (someone who) is not able to keep (himself) alive" (29.3), i.e., the materially most wretched people in society.[85] This recalls a similar description that that psalmist used with reference to himself in Part One (v. 15.3), but the respective situations have been dramatically reversed. The morbid pessimism of the earlier passage is here transformed into a glorious hope for the future through the implied agency of Yahweh, the Life-Giver (cf. v. 28). The "seed" (זֶרַע) of this future generation (30.1) significantly broadens the scope of the poet's prior reference to the "seed" of Jacob/Israel (v. 23).

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[83] "This last panel of the psalm identifies [the poet-prayer] as the one whose suffering and salvation are proclaimed to the world as a call to repent (notice *shub* in v. 27…) and believe in the kingdom of God, the dominion of the LORD" (Mays 1994:112).

[84] These two verbs are interpreted as "predictive perfects" with reference to a future fulfillment, i.e., they will eat (i.e., participate in a ritual feast) and bow down (i.e., worship). The action of religious "eating" (אָכְלוּ) in 29.1 echoes the same verb and sense in v. 26.1 (יֹאכְלוּ), thus forming an *exclusio* around strophe F.

[85] "To praise the LORD in the throes of death means that some profound change has taken place because of the salvation of the afflicted one that brings dying itself within the sphere of the LORD's reign. The reach of the LORD's righteousness is pressing on the limits of Israel's view of the possible" (Mays 1994:113).

Another bonding element within Part Two is the summons to "proclaim" (יְסֻפַּ֫ר/אֲסַפְּרָה) the name of Yahweh (22.1/30.2, *inclusio*). The importance of such public testimony concerning Yahweh's "righteousness" (צִדְקָתְ֫וֹ) is underscored through a reiteration of similar concepts in v. 31: "they will declare (it) to a people (about) to be born."[86] On a number of occasions in the Hebrew Bible, the notion of "righteousness" is connected with that of "salvation" (e.g., Isa. 46:13, 56:1). Thus, the LORD's covenant justice is overtly manifested in his mighty acts of delivering his people in their time of need, an expectation which the dire straits of the psalmist had almost led him to "abandon" as he took up his lament (v. 1; cf. v. 11).[87]

A final word of exaltation brings Psalm 22 to a close: "Indeed, (Yahweh) has done (it, i.e., deliver me/us)!" (31.2), and this declaration forges a final contrast with the prayer's downcast beginning: "My God…why have you abandoned me…!" (1.1). This brief utterance also forms the "reason" portion in an alternating pattern of *praise* and *thanksgiving* that runs throughout each of the strophes of Part Two. This sequence is analogous to the interchange of lament and appeal which typifies Part One.

stanza/strophe	*verses: call to praise*	*: reasons for praise*
E	22-23	24
E'	25.1-2, 26.2-3	26.1
F	27	28
F'	29-31.1	31.2

[86] "Finally, in contrast to the images of death that have so dominated the Psalm, [the poet] talks of future generations, linking verse 24 [23] that speaks of the 'seed' (*zéra*) of Jacob and the 'seed' of Israel with the 'seed' (v. 31 [30]) of a people yet to be born" (Magonet 1994:110).

[87] "The vision of this hymn [stanza F'] is prophetic in character and eschatological in scope. Its place at the conclusion of Psalm 22 connects a vision of the universal, comprehensive, everlasting kingdom of God to what the LORD has wrought in the life of this afflicted one whose prayer and praise the psalm expresses. . . . In its present form the figure in the psalm shares in the corporate vocation of Israel and the messianic role of David" (Mays 1994:113)—as, indeed, its superscription would also imply.

In three of the four "reasons" (or "grounds") sections (the exception being 26.1), the initial colon begins with the ambiguous conjunction כִּי: "for/because/that," but in these instances probably also asseverative: "truly/indeed!" The theological point of Psalm 22 thus seems to be that the LORD graciously cares and provides for his own, sooner or later—those who worship him from every people-group on earth as well as from each generation, station, and situation in life.

It may be helpful at this point to summarize the "finely wrought compositional design" (Bratcher & Reyburn 1994:108) of Psalm 22 by means of the following chart, which indicates the various layers of organization, from top to bottom:

Psalm 22												
PART	ONE (1-21)								TWO (22-31)			
Cycle	A (1-11)				B (12-21)				C (22-31)			
STANZA	**A**	**A'**	**B**	**B'**	**C**	**C'**	**D**	**D'**	**E**	**E'**	**F**	**F'**
Strophe	1-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-13	14-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-26	27-28	29-31

The preceding strictly linear structure may be complemented and hence compacted by a thematic concentric arrangement, as proposed by Dorsey (1999:178):[88]

A ***Introductory Complaint***: God does not hear my cry for help! (1-8)

B ***Specific Appeal*** for Help (9-11)

"Do not be far away (אַל־תִּרְחַק) from me…for there is no helper (עוֹזֵר)!"—v. 11

C ***Description*** of Dire Situation: the pit of despair (12-18)

[88] This may be compared with VanGemeren's rather artificial chiastic arrangement: A (1-5), B (6-8), C (9-11), C' (12-21), B' (22-24), A' (25-31), the segments of which do not cohere very well either formally or semantically, for example, with respect to the center: C—"God's Covenantal Responsibilities"; C'—"Abandonment and Prayer for Covenantal Favor" (1991:199).

"Do not be far away (אַל־תִּרְחָק) from me…hasten to help (לְעֶזְרָתִי)!"—v. 19[89]

B' ***Specific Appeal*** for Help (19-21)

A' ***Concluding Praise***: God has heard my cry for help! (22-31)

This proposal rather generalizes the interpersonal dynamics of Psalm 22, but it does provide another formally defensible perspective on the text's expert literary construction.

As I have tried to demonstrate in the preceding discussion, the symmetrical arrangement of this poetic composition is not the superficial product of an artificially contrived and externally imposed desire to achieve harmony or symmetry of form. On the contrary, this framework is eminently functional, being confirmed by the corresponding theologically-focused content of the text itself and the proficient manner in which the psalmist has exploited the traditional literary (artistic-rhetorical) devices at his disposal to fashion his heartfelt message for oral-aural proclamation (prayer, recitation, cantillation, etc.) in the most compelling and appealing way.

9. On the interaction of topic and type

> "What happens in this psalm is, in its basic plot, a case of the experience through which the believing Israelite passed in praying in tribulation, using prayers for help and then later, when delivered, praising God with a company of friends. Here the two are joined, intensified, and magnified in a scenario that identifies the combination as the way in which God manifests and discloses his universal eternal reign" (Mays 1994:108).

Whatever the language, any significant piece of literature maximizes the artistic form in which it has been constructed on both the macro- as well as the micro-level of discourse in order to enhance the communication of its authorial content and intent. These latter two aspects are also closely interconnected with one another in the compositional process, for the subject matter of a text must somehow be related to the writer's perceived

[89] The parallel pleas of vv. 11 and 19 constitute an *exclusio*, a structural frame around the central core (vv. 12-18). The repeated notion of being "far away" (רחק) is present to mark the onset of distinct poetic units (i.e., structural *anaphora*) in vv. 1.2, 11.1, and 19.1.

objective(s), or his (her) message may be judged by readers to be inappropriate or irrelevant to the situation in which it is transmitted, or the setting to which it is to be applied. We see this felicitous integration of thought, word, and purpose in Psalm 22. Although we are very much removed from the original worship venue for which this liturgical prayer was first created and in which it was subsequently articulated on innumerable occasions in Israel's history of public prayer, it is still possible to advance a few general hypotheses which would account for the final shape and substance of the text.

To begin with, one cannot deny the possibility that certain segments of this psalm may have existed elsewhere as part of the Hebrew corpus of religious literature, whether oral or written. In this connection, one might compare verses 6 and 7 with Psalm 44:13-14; verses 11, 13, 19, 22, and 25 with Psalm 35:18, 22-24; and verses 6-8, 22, 26-27 with Psalm 69:16-19, 30, 32, 34—as being possible manifestations of literary *intertextuality* (though the diachronic direction of influence cannot be determined).[90] However, it is the canonical, received form of the message (essentially the Masoretic Text) that we are concerned with in our *analysis* and which forms the basis for any type of *translation* today, whether more or less form-based/meaning-oriented. As has been validated in the preceding text study—and contrary to the opinion of some scholars (e.g., Westermann 1989:82-83)—Psalm 22 is demonstrably a complete whole, structurally as well as rhetorically,[91] and it is on this basis that we might make some tentative observations with regard to its overall communicative function.

With respect to its *semantic organization*, it may be argued that this psalm's two principal thematic constituents are introduced together in the opening stanza. The first

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[90] Broyles calls attention to the many similarities in structure and theme between Psalms 22 and 69 (1999:121). Holladay calls attention to certain notable parallels in Jeremiah (1996:42).

[91] There is a critical "difficulty of classification inherent in form criticism, namely that lament and praise are often found in one psalm: *praise is frequently the fruit of a transformation in outlook which the psalmist embraces in the midst of crisis or difficulty*" (Hutchinson 2005:95, original italics). It is almost as if this transformation is intended to occur, by faith in the mercy and power of the God being addressed, during the very articulation of the prayer in corporate worship.

notion, which maintains its prominence throughout Part One is that of divine *separation*: "Why have you abandoned me?" A transcendent Yahweh seems to be both spatially and temporally remote (vv. 1-2), which are of course conceptual metaphors suggesting the great psychological barrier that seemingly blocks the alienated psalmist from access to his God. Closely associated with the idea of separation is that of *silence* and the communication breakdown that has occurred: "You do not answer me!" This sovereign quiescence, in an apparent pun on two possible senses of the noun דְּוּמִיָּה, has resulted in the poet's "restless" condition (2.3).

The second topical core is then introduced by way of contrast. The second strophe of stanza A celebrates the *solidarity* that an imminent Yahweh maintains with his people "Israel." This involves an affinity and a fidelity that manifests itself in action: time and again in the past he answered their "trust" with "deliverance" in the day of trouble (v. 4). His *proximity* to hear their "cries" for help led in turn to their "praise" of him (3.2, 5.1). Here we have abundant speech, or sound, set in opposition to the above-mentioned quiet that confounded the psalmist, who perceived his "crying," even "roaring," to go unanswered (1.2-2.1). His consequent mental disorientation, occasioned by the apparent aloofness of the "Holy One" upon whom he and his "fathers" depended (3.1, 4.1), is highlighted by his initial plea: Why has *my* God chosen to ignore *me*, in contrast to his merciful dealings with fellow members of the covenant community? He is shocked and dismayed by this supposed contradiction between established theology and his own personal experience (Craigie 1983:199).

The psychological correlates of the spatial metaphors of separation versus proximity may be designated by an antithetical pair of religious terms: estrangement versus fellowship. These concepts, along with the corresponding negative/positive feelings and attitudes that they are associated with, combine to form the connotative background which the psalmist blends into his prayer-"song" to add emotive richness and resonance to the thematic "melody" and he is playing, be that largely dissonant (Part One) or harmonious (Part Two). Moreover, it may be that his extreme mental agitation finds its structural reflection in the rapidly shifting topics and perspectives (i.e.,

alternating from strophe to strophe) which typify the first major portion of Psalm 22 in comparison with the second.

These two discordant themes are appropriately treated in two distinct, but closely interrelated types of poetic composition—the *lament* (sad) and the *eulogy* (glad), the first featuring in Part One (1-21), the second in Part Two (22-31) (cf. the discussion in ch. 3). The former manifests illocutionary functions such as complaint, protest, and appeal, while the latter conveys the positive pragmatic notions of praise, thanksgiving, and profession (of faith).[92] We are not dealing, however, with two independent psalmic compositions, rather artificially patched together in their present unified form. Instead, abundant evidence from the Psalter itself would indicate that the lament and the eulogy (thanksgiving) were very often conjoined in the corpus of Hebrew hymnody, e.g., Pss. 10, 13, 28, 41, 55, 64, 69, and many more.

Two pairs of fundamental presuppositions underlie and coalesce in what on the textual surface appear to be two antithetical literary impulses: The first concerns the character of the primary addressee (*who* he is); the second relates to what this individual's activities (*what* he does/has done). The "personage" involved here of course is *Yahweh*, the covenant God of Israel—the nation as a whole, but in particular all those who have accepted his lordship and live accordingly. A pair of fundamental assumptions that pertains to the *lament* may be expressed as follows: Yahweh has not acted in a crisis situation where he might have been expected to do something on behalf of his believer. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile for the troubled person to address his God in prayer under such circumstances, no matter how seemingly hopeless his situation. The second pair of presuppositions follows from the first: Yahweh has indeed demonstrated his willingness to act in behalf of those who found themselves in a most difficult and dangerous predicament; in fact, he does so on a regular basis as their history has borne out. Therefore, he is most worthy of praise—not only the acclaim rendered by his pious

[92] Stanza F (vv. 27-31) further exemplifies certain features of the so-called "royal" (or "kingship") sub-type (Broyles 1999:120; cf. Wendland 2002:51-52). Note that expressions of *trust* are, almost paradoxically, interwoven within the lament proper of Part One, e.g., vv. 3-5, 9-10.

people, but surprisingly, also that offered by heathen nations found all over the world (v. 27). From this transactional perspective we see that the two principal parts of Psalm 22 are not unrelated at all. On the contrary, they readily complement each other (thematically and literarily) in an ongoing tradition of faith that God's faithful community sought to affirm and articulate in their public as well as private liturgical expression.

The two different poetic types (genres) that comprise Psalm 22 evince a number of formal similarities, held in common with many similar lament-eulogies in the Psalter. Among the more prominent artistic-rhetorical features of Hebrew lyric poetry, as illustrated in the preceding analysis, are the following:

- use of a cola-level chiasmus (inverted parallelism) to introduce or conclude a text unit;
- foregrounding the central topic through its expression in the form of a larger introverted or some other symmetrical construction;
- the repetition and strategic placement of key terms;
- various figures of speech and vivid imagery;
- emphatic, often contrastive personal pronouns;
- intensive vocative openers;
- frequent direct address to Yahweh;
- phonological (including rhythmic) patterning for reinforcing certain key concepts.

Governing this entire poetic compositional process is the application of a comprehensive strategy of balanced structuration. This features the artistic positioning of corresponding semantic elements, both analogous and antithetical, on all levels of linguistic organization to give a sense of unity and harmony to the whole lyric-liturgical composition, as well as to highlight the important disjunctions or thematic peaks within it.[93]

[93] The unity and message of Psalm 22 would be severely diminished if it were limited to the first 21 (22) verses. Thus, many commentators view the subsequent text is post-exilic in origin (e.g., Holladay 1996:43). Besides having no manuscript evidence for such a proposal, we have on the other hand many

Nevertheless, there are also some important communicative differences between Parts One and Two. The chief of these pertain to the divergence in their respective illocutionary functions, as well as to the more obvious matters of topic and tone. These variations would seem to be significant enough to substantiate our initial inclination to distinguish the two sections as being representative of distinct poetic category types. The major dissimilarities as they apply specifically to Psalm 22 (not the complete Psalter) are listed for comparative purposes below:

Lament	**Eulogy**
personal focus.....	communal focus
introverted perspective.....	extroverted perspective
connotatively sad	connotatively glad
sudden contrasts	smooth progression of ideas
subject matter differences:	
*affliction from Yahweh	*blessing from Yahweh*
*Yahweh as adversary	*Yahweh as deliverer-vindicator*
*(but his aid is possible)	*(his aid has been demonstrated)*
*constant attack by enemies	*surrounding fellowship of friends*
*pain and perceived affliction	*health and total well-being*
typical imagery reflects:	
*persecution and suffering	*peace and tranquility*
*great disappointment	*complete satisfaction*
*continual conflict	*constant unity*
*interpersonal disjunction	*interpersonal harmony*
emotive climax:	
*individual descent	*universal ascent*
*down to the grave	*forward to a new generation*

We also note an interesting contrast in the respective relationships involving the principal "cast of characters" (or participants) in this psalm. They correspond as shown on the diagram below with reference to the divine center of thematic "gravity":

laments that manifest a medial break as radical and significant as we find in Psalm 22 (vv. 21/22), for example, Ps. 73:14/15.

Lament: *enemies* ← (supports) ---- **YAHWEH** ---- (disappoints) → *me*
Eulogy: *enemies* ← (destroys) ---- **YAHWEH** ---- (delivers) → *me*

10. The thematic flow of Psalm 22

The dynamic movement of semantic progression, or thematic development proceeds in the main along an axis which begins from the key concept of "separation" in Part One and extends to that of "solidarity" in Part Two. However, allusions to the opposing notion are found at the end of each progression, for example, a passing reference to the unified "praises of Israel" in stanza A (v. 3.2) in contrast to mortuary "dust" in stanza F (v. 29.2). The theme of alienation is gradually intensified in both time and psychological immediacy—from the distant ancestral past (stanza A), through the trials of the psalmist's birth (B), and finally to the persecution of the immediate present (C-D). As part of his general isolation, the poet's links with his own society are perceived to grow ever more tenuous. This begins with an ostracism occasioned by widespread verbal abuse (B) that is late exacerbated by the inflection of severe physical punishment (C). This anti-personal movement descends finally to his enemies' determination to get rid of him for good (D).

In vivid contrast to this connotatively negative movement, the positive concept of community is progressively strengthened in Part Two. This extends ever outward from the familiar circle of family, friends, and fellow-countrymen (E) to encompass a future world fellowship which even includes all foreigners (F). This all-inclusive company constituted for the pious Israelite quite an unexpected group of individuals, for it incorporated the dead, the dregs of society, as well as the yet unborn. As was observed during the earlier structural analysis, the climactic peak/pit of each Part occurs at an important boundary, namely, the psalm's virtual midpoint (death/the grave, v. 15.3) and its compositional conclusion (life/the coming generation, v. 31.2).

A cluster of related motifs, which revolve around another polarity, namely, that of "silence" as opposed to "speech", may be viewed as functioning in contrastive fashion

to coordinate, or mediate between, the two central ideas of separation versus solidarity. Thus, Yahweh's apparent lack of response to the poet's pleas (stanza A) is highlighted by example with reference to the garrulous mob of the sufferer's surrounding enemies (B). The deafening divine silence that accompanies his socially-ascribed status as a religious outcast returns to the fore in stanzas C-D, and he is forced to withdraw even deeper within himself to contemplate his miserable condition in utter loneliness, seemingly forsaken by God as well as man. It is rather surprising then at the close of the prayer's first half (strophe D') to hear the psalmist break out of his introspective state in words that resolutely ring out once more in a final appeal to the LORD for deliverance.

In extended contrast to the preceding, the sound of worship and praise animates the eulogue of Part Two. The mass chorus of the godly (stanza E) takes up the "cries" of their ancestors (v. 5), growing louder and louder as ever more of the representative segments of humanity, especially those whom one would not expect to be present, are progressively integrated into this joyous throng. So great is the acclamation of Yahweh's glorious rule that even voices that would normally be completely silent, i.e., the deceased as well as the unconceived, are compelled to join in to swell the eschatological anthem of thanksgiving (F).

A third noteworthy polarity parallels and complements the other two—that of "strength" as opposed to "weakness". The alternating and interchanging pattern formed by this thematic contrast is not difficult to discern as it proceeds from one end of Psalm 22 to the other. The total supremacy of Yahweh (though distant) and the increasingly violent hostility of the poet's nearby adversaries contrast markedly with his own lack of power and apparent inability to do anything to improve his dreadful situation. It is a perceptible personal deficiency that grows progressively worse in images of abject frailty as his lament unfolds (especially stanzas C-D). The "afflicted one" (v. 24) never abandons his hope entirely, however, and at the very brink of death, with only his clothing left as the evidence of his demise (v. 18), he makes a final attempt (strophe D') to renew his physical and spiritual vitality by appealing to the LORD, his "strength" (v. 19).

The mighty power of Yahweh, which operates on behalf of his oppressed people, then is a prominent thought that runs throughout the last "half" of Psalm 22. The thematic development proceeds from individual and communal (Israel-oriented) acts of deliverance (stanza E) and peaks out in a description of the LORD's universal kingdom.[94] This theological realm is quite unexpectedly, given the ethnic prejudice often manifested in this nation (e.g., Jonah), expanded to embrace all peoples (F). Here we have a godly dominion in which, according to the divine order of things and contrary to all human notions of greatness, "right makes might!"—and a vindicating "salvation" ultimately comes to those who don't even know it (v. 31). The only response to such a paradoxical outcome is expressed in the poem's final utterance: כִּי (יְהוָה) עָשָׂה!

11. The literary-structural analysis of Psalm 22—a brief retrospect and prospect

In conclusion, we may note several benefits that may be derived from a literary-structural analysis of a given biblical discourse, in its entirety, integrity, and originality (i.e., the Hebrew text in relation to its assumed context of use), whether this involves an entire book or a constituent pericope. A comprehensive, discourse-oriented approach can provide analysts with a vigorous new perspective on the intricate design and personal implications of theological literature of the Scriptures. It is a methodology that not only restores confidence in the reliability of the particular text that one is examining, but one which at the same time can awaken one to some novel insights into its compositional and thematic dynamics—as well as its transferred relevance in application to a contemporary setting. This is especially true in the case of a literary masterpiece having a message as significant as that of Psalm 22 for the people of God, believers of every age,

[94] It is important to note both the individual as well as the communal reference and application, not only of Psalm 22 but also the Psalter as a whole. "God addresses both the individual and the community. . . . Old Testament scholars have been guilty of emphasizing Israel's collective experience as a worshiping community to the virtual exclusion of the individual use. . . . the Psalms contain evidence of Israel's private devotional experience ('Sicut Cervus'), as individuals call on the Lord to deliver them from adversity, long for his presence, and are involved in dialogue with the Lord (Pss. 73, 139 [+ 22!])" (VanGemeren 1991:7).

language, and culture.[95] The New Testament writers set the tone and gave direction to this inscribed hermeneutical course by fully drawing out the Messianic implications of both the initial lament as well as the concluding eulogy—that is, by ascribing these to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ (e.g., Mt. 27, Jn. 19, Hb. 2). These inspired interpreters thereby added a whole new dimension to this psalm's central thematic emphases concerning solidarity, strength, and speech in relation to divine salvation history.

A careful, reflective "reading" of Psalm 22 can lead readers (or listeners) today to an ever greater awareness of, and appreciation for, this prayer-song's artistic beauty, emotive power, theological richness, and hence also its pragmatic significance with reference to their own everyday existence. Thus we too encounter similar situations in life—being more or less "down and out" in the surroundings of an increasingly hostile secular society, whether overtly antagonistic or insidiously apathetic to matters of a spiritual nature. Yet we also possess the same invigorating hope as that offered here—in a righteous, almighty God, who has already provided deliverance for all people in the One prefigured in this psalm, who has led the way and is even now controlling the events of history in preparation for an ultimate salvation to come (vv. 24, 28; cf. Hb. 2:9-15). So in the "fear of the LORD" (v. 23.1) we too are summoned to make the same joyous response to the call of the psalmist—hopefully in the words of a poetic translation that captures at least some of the artistic beauty and rhetorical power of the original text. We might then articulate (ideally orally) a universal, timeless paean of praise and thanks to

[95] This is not to claim that scholars and versions agree on the internal structure of a unified biblical pericope like Psalm 22—far from it. My strophic structure that was outlined earlier agrees exactly with that proposed by the ESV and very closely with the NIV. However, it differs significantly with the strophes/stanzas indicated in the *Tanakh* Jewish translation, for example, which appears to make the major break of Ps. 22 at v. 24, or the NRSV, which segments even more strangely at the midpoint of v. 21.

Similarly, Terrien's commentary, which pays special attention to the "strophic structure" of the Psalms, begins its third principal division at v. 24 rather than v. 22, as proposed above (2003:205). Such differences naturally affect the reader-hearer's understanding of the text, both as a whole and in terms of its constituent parts. In these cases, serious Bible readers and scholars alike must carefully examine the literary-structural evidence (whatever has been provided in the paratext) and then come to their own conclusion and construal of the psalm.

a God who cares, in unison with a fellowship that embraces the whole of humanity (vv. 22.1, 26.2-3):

אֲסַפְּרָה שִׁמְךָ לְאֶחָי
בְּתוֹךְ קָהָל אֲהַלְלֶךָּ׃
יְהַלְלוּ יְהוָה דֹּרְשָׁיו
יְחִי לְבַבְכֶם לָעַד׃

12. A final theological reflection on Psalm 22

Psalm 22 is a prayer of complaint that, perhaps more than any psalm, serves as a link between the Old Testament and the story of Jesus' passion. Indeed, this psalm is an appropriate lectionary reading for Good Friday because the Gospels cite and allude to it at least five times in the crucifixion account. It is important to recognize, however, that Psalm 22 is not important simply because it appears in the New Testament. Rather, the New Testament writers drew from it because of its profound expressions of suffering and faith.

Psalm 22 has "an intensity and a comprehensiveness" that is almost unequaled among psalms of this type.[1] The psalm has two main parts: (1) a prayer for help in verses 1-21a; and (2) a song of praise in verses 21b-31. Both of these sections have two prominent divisions in which repetition of a main theme, sometimes with exact vocabulary, strengthens the psalm's expression of both complaint and praise. Verses 1-11 has two complaints (verses 1-2, 6-8), each of which contains some of the most striking language in the Psalms. The psalm opens with the famous cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

At the other end of this section the psalmist complains, "I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people" (verse 6). In both cases, however, the complaint is followed by an extended confession of trust that recalls God's protection in the past (verses 3-5, 9-11). The first confession of trust is corporate ("In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them," verse 4) and second individual and personal ("Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast," verse 9).

The prayer for help in verses 12-21a focuses on the nature of the psalmist's trouble. Verses 12-13 and 16a include images of animals that circle the psalmist waiting to devour and destroy ("bulls encircle me," verse 12; "dogs are all around me," verse 16a). These images are followed in

both cases by complaints of physical weakness: "I am poured out like water" (verse 14); "my tongue sticks to my jaws" (verse 15a); "I can count all my bones" (verse 17). The section concludes with a concatenation of petitions for God to be near and to save from the sword, the dog, and the lion (verses 19-21a).

The second major portion of the psalm turns to praise and assurance that God has heard and answered. This section offers praise and thanksgiving that matches the repeated calls for help in verses 1-21a. Verse 21b responds tersely to the complaints of verses 1-18 by saying "From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me." The rest of the psalm then promises praise to God, promises that progress from the psalmist's profession before worshippers (verses 22-25) to the praise of those who "sleep in the earth" (verse 29).

The psalmist's promise of praise dominates verses 22-26. Twice the psalmist pledges to honor God by recalling God's goodness (verse 22) and by making vows in the midst of the congregation (verse 25). After both promises of praise the psalmist then declares God's past goodness to those in trouble and those of lowly estate ("the afflicted," verse 24; "the poor" and "those who seek him," verse 26; the word translated "afflicted" and the word translated "poor" are actually the same, *?an?*). Verses 27-31 then expand the promise of praise so that every person in human history is included: "all the families of the nations" (verse 27), "all who sleep in the earth" (verse 29), and "future generations" (verse 30).

The connection between Psalm 22 and the story of Jesus' suffering and death is natural given the extensive description of suffering the psalm contains. Perhaps the most obvious connection between the passion story and Psalm 22 is Jesus' cry of God-forsakenness: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1; Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46). Other portions of the psalm provide an outline of the experience of Jesus on the cross.

Mark 15:29 (Matthew 27:39) implies the language of Psalm 22:7 in the description of passersby at the crucifixion:

"All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads."

Matthew 27:43 also frames the taunts of the religious leaders with an allusion to Psalm 22:8:

"*Commit your cause to the LORD;*
let him deliver --
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"

In all four Gospels (Mark 15:24; Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:24) the description of the soldiers' activity beneath the cross draws on Psalm 22:18:

"they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

In addition to these examples, John 19:28 probably has Psalm 22:15 in mind when reporting that Jesus says, "I am thirsty" in order "to fulfill scripture." The scripture fulfilled is most likely Psalm 22:15.

Though the original setting of Psalm 22 had nothing to do with the passion of Jesus, a Messianic reading is a natural result of the psalm's extensive expression of suffering and its far-reaching declaration of hope. The psalm "explodes the limits" of poetic expression and thus expands the Old Testament understanding of God, human life, and death.[2]

Not only does the psalmist cry out to God with unparalleled expressions of pain and loss (verse 1), but the writer also expresses hope in something close akin to resurrection (verses 29-30). Thus, Psalm 22 is appropriate for the hope that accompanies Jesus' passion as well as the grief. It anticipates a vision of God who holds the believer even after death that will only be expressed fully centuries later.

Notes:

[1]James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p. 107.
[2]Ellen F. Davis, "Exploding the Limits: Form and Function in Psalm 22," *JSOT* 53 (1992), 102-103.

Jerome Creach (https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1182)

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