

I. **The Psalter**

a. Title – “songs of praise” in both Greek and Hebrew, but also includes poetry and wisdom literature, in addition to praise songs

i. MT – תהלים

ii. LXX – ψαλμὸς

1. Includes one additional Psalm (#151) which is explicitly added to MT

b. Divisions

i. Five Books

BOOK	PSALMS
Book I	Pss 1-41
Book II	Pss 42-72
Book III	Pss 73-89
Book IV	Pss 90-106
Book V	Pss 107-150

1. Analogy to the Pentateuch

2. Each Book ends with a doxology

ii. Outline according to Collections

COLLECTION	PSALMS
David: 73 Psalms	2-41 (ex 33); 51-70 (ex 66-67); 138-45;
Asaph: 11 Psalms	73-83
Sons of Korah (Kohathites)	42-49 (ex 43); 84-88 (ex 86)
Ascents (Feasts/Festivals)	120-134
Egyptian Hallel (Passover)	113-118
Hallel Psalms	146-150

1. Asaph was a Levite musician who played a leading role in the music of worship during the time of David (1 Chr 15:17-19; 16:4-5) and whose descendents carried on the family tradition of music (Ezra 3:10)

2. The Kohathites were Levites, descended through Kohath (1 Chr 6:22) who were involved in the music of the temple

iii. “Elohistic” Psalter

1. Psalms 42-83 supposed represent a 2nd stage in the compilation

a. Davidic Psalms in this collection decidedly use the divine name Elohim and outside use the divine name Yahweh

b. Psalm 14 is basically **duplicated** in Psalm 53 with the exception of changing the divine name from YHWH to Elohim in 3 places

2. Notably, the divine name YHWH is not absent in the Elohistic Psalter


Y	E	DESCRIPTION	PSALMS
Yahwist	Elohist	1. Original Davidic Collection	3-41
		2. Korahite Psalms	42-49
		3. Second Davidic Collection	51-72
		4. Asaph Guild Psalms	50, 73-83
		5. Additional Korahite Psalms	84-85, 87-88
		6. Other Collections	90-150
		a. Yahweh's Kingship	93, 95-99
		b. Songs of Praise	103-107
		c. Psalms of Pilgrimage	120-134
		d. Third Davidic Collection	138-145
	e. Hallelujah Psalms	111-118, 146-150	

c. Authorship and Date

i. Internal evidence

1. David
2. Solomon (Pss 72, 127)
3. Moses (Ps 90)
4. Asaph
5. Sons of Korah
6. Heman the Ezrahite (Ps 88)
7. Ethan the Ezrahite (Ps 89)
8. Musical director or choir master (more than 50x)

ii. Titles – 116 Psalms have titles (34 are anonymous)

1. Psalms outside the Psalter sometimes have titles (examples include 2 Sam 22:1 and Isa 38:9 – David and Hezekiah's psalms of thanksgiving)
2. Function
 - a. Identification with a person or group
 - b. Historical information concerning the psalm
 - c. Musical information
 - d. Liturgical information
 - e. Psalm type: hymn, song, etc.
3. Use of the  creates questions about authorship
 - a. "For" – i.e. For David
 - b. "By" – i.e. By David
 - c. "To" – i.e. To David
 - d. "With reference to/concerning/about" – i.e. About David
 - e. "For the use of..." – i.e. For the use of the Sons of Korah

- II. Davidic Authorship** – “... the sweet psalmist of Israel...” (2 Sam 23:1)
- a. David use the 3rd Person – Lack of 1st person use implies different authorship
 - i. Classical literature (Xenophon), Caesar, etc.
 - ii. OT evidence
 - iii. Mesopotamian inscriptions
 - iv. Ugaritic letters
 - v. Conclusion: David’s use of the 3rd person was typical of his time/culture
 - b. References to temple structure – Could mean “tent” (Ugaritic gods lived in tents)
 - i. Already built (Psalms 5, 27, 28, 63, 68, 69, 101, 138)
 - ii. Pre-Davidic use of terminology was common
 - iii. Terminology inappropriate for Solomon Temple (“Palace”)
 - iv. Conclusion: David’s use of the Hebrew word “tent” was completely appropriate given the biblical and other ANE data
 - c. Telltale Aramaisms – Potentially indicates a post-exilic date
 - i. Terms – Example: In Psalm 139:2, לְ is a direct object marker
 - ii. David and the Aramaeans – David was suzerain over the Babylonians
 1. See 2 Sam 8
 - iii. Tendency of poetry to borrow from other languages/cultures
 - iv. Dahood and Psalms 2 and 110
 - v. Conclusion: Aramaisms do not necessarily equate to a post-exilic date
 - d. Historical David not qualified – David was either too rude as a warrior, or too busy as a king... in other words, he had neither the time nor talent to write the psalms because he was gifted/busy doing other things
 - i. Contrary evidence of David’s qualifications
 1. 1 Sam 16:14-23, esp v18: One of the young men answered, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him."
 2. 2 Sam 23:1: Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel...
 3. Amos 6:5: ... “who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music...”
 4. David was an organizer of musical guilds (see 1 Ch 16:4-5; 2 Ch 7:6; and, 2 Ch 29:25)
 - ii. Conclusion: David’s many qualifications do not disqualify him

III. **Hebrew Psalm Titles – Historicity**

- a. General Liberal approach
 - i. Late, Maccabean date
 - ii. C.A. Briggs and Psalm 27 Example
 1. Argued that Psalm 27 (v1-7) was likely first drafted before the exile, then subsequently edited during and after the exile
 2. Psalm 27:7-9, 11-12 were added later
 3. Eliminated v10 altogether due to Briggs' post Maccabean dating
- b. Evidence of Pre-Maccabean Title Provenance
 - i. Forgotten terminology
 1. "To the Choir Leader"
 2. "To the Lilies"
 3. "According to Maidens"

IV. **Methods of Interpreting the Psalms**

- a. Traditional Historical Method (see Documentary Hypothesis)
- b. Literary-Analytical Historical Methods
- c. Form-Critical Method (See Hermann Gunkel)
 - i. *Sitz im Leben* – "the life of the people"
 - ii. *Gattung* – "literary form"
- d. "Cultic" or "Cult Historical" Method (See Sigmund Mowinckel)
- e. Eschatological-Messianic Method

- V. **Hermann Gunkel (1852-1932)**: First introduced and developed form criticism by classifying literature based on form, function, and social context. He shifted attention away from analyses of entire texts (Source Criticism) to smaller units of text, also known as pericopies. Thus, Gunkel introduced the idea that the Book of Psalms was the product of Jerusalem temple cult. The Psalms were not private, prayerful, meditative reflections of individuals but the Psalms were the prayers of the community, which were developed and used within a liturgical context. Gunkel proposed that liturgy is the Psalms original "setting in life" or *Stiz im Leben*. However, over time, the Psalms took on a personal function as well.



- a. Key Concepts
 - i. Credited for creating a *function* study of the Psalms
 - ii. *Gattung* – “literary form” or *Gattungen* (“literary forms”)
 - iii. *Stiz im Leben* – “the life of the people”
 - 1. The individual or communal life situation in which the *Gattungen* functioned
 - 2. In the case of the Psalms, Gunkel argued for liturgical functions
- b. Psalm Types – Gunkel identified and described 5 primary *Gattungen* for the Psalms
 - i. Major categories (or *Gattungen*)
 - ii. Sub-categories
- c. Gunkel’s literary analysis of the Psalms (*Gattungen*)

	GATTUNGEN	PSALMS
Major Categories	1. Hymns (<i>Hymnus</i>)	8, 19, 29, 33, etc
	a. Songs of Zion (<i>Zionslieder</i>)	46, 48, 76, 78
	b. “Enthronement” Psalms (<i>Thronbesteigungslieder</i>)	47, 93, 97, 99
	2. Community Laments (<i>Klagelieder des Volkes</i>)	44, 74, 79, 80
	3. Royal Psalms (<i>Konigpsalmen</i>)	2, 18, 20, 45, 110
Minor Categories	4. Individual Laments (<i>Klagelieder des Einzelnen</i>)	3, 7, 13, 25, 51
	a. Psalms of Confidence (<i>Vetrauenspsalmen</i>)	4, 11, 16, 23
	5. Individual Thanksgivings (<i>Danklieder des Einzelnen</i>)	30, 32, 34
	6. The Vow (<i>Gelubde</i>)	7:17, 13:5, 31:7
	7. Pilgrimage Songs (<i>Wallfahrtslieder</i>)	84, 122
	8. Community Thanksgivings (<i>Danklieder des Volkes</i>)	76, 124
	9. Wisdom Poems (<i>Weisheitsdichtungen</i>)	1, 37, 49
Minor Categories	10. Liturgies (<i>Liturgien</i>)	
	a. Cultic Oder	8, 42, 43, 46
	b. Prophetic Order	12, 75
	c. Torah Liturgies	15, 24
	11. Mixed Types (<i>Mischungen</i>)	9, 10, 40, 78

- d. Problems
 - i. *Zusammenhang* – “cultural milieu” c.f. *Sitz im Leben*
 - ii. Timelessness
 - iii. Directness
 - iv. Personal nature
- e. Key works related to the Psalms:
 - i. *Ausgewahlte Psalmen (Selected Psalms)*, 1904
 - ii. *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Religion in Past and Present)*, 1913
 - iii. *Die Psalmen (The Psalms)*, 1926

VI. **Sigmund Mowinckel (1884-1965)**: From the 1920s onwards Mowinckel headed a school of thought on the Psalms which sometimes clashed with the Form Critical conclusions of Hermann Gunkel and those who followed in Gunkel's footsteps (Hans Joachim-Kraus etc). In broad terms, Gunkel strongly advocated a view of the Psalms which focused on the two notable names for God occurring therein: Yahweh and Elohim. The schools of Psalm writing springing there from were termed "Yahwist" and "Elohistic". Mowinckel's approach to the Psalms differed quite a bit from Gunkel's. Mowinckel explained the Psalms as wholly cultic both in origin and in intention. He attempted to relate more than 40 psalms to a hypothetical autumnal New Year festival.



a. Key Concepts

- i. Cultic origins – Mowinckel had a positive view of the cult
- ii. “Enthronement Psalms” – Mowinckel’s hypothetical royal enthronement festival serves as an occasion of divine epiphany with a sacral procession and the proclamation of a covenant that carries conditions as well as promise.
 1. Annual festivals in Babylon and Israel – In his hypothetical annual New Year’s festival in Israel (similar to the *Akitu* festival in Babylon), the Israelite king is enthroned and this act brings promise of Shalom to the nation
 2. “Yahweh has become King” - Also includes the idea of continual rule.
 3. Yahweh’s fight with the dragon – Similar to ANE mythology

b. Mowinckel argues that the book currently known as Psalms was begun in the monarchy to about 400-300 BCE through a series of 6 incremental formations, which is evidenced by the Elohist and Yahwist Psalters

- i. Elohist Psalter, Psalms 42-83
 1. Elohim: 200x
 2. Yahweh: 43x
- ii. Yahwist Psalter, Psalms 3-41, 84-150
 1. Elohim: 29x
 2. Yahweh: 642x

c. Problems

- i. OT lack of evidence for Yahweh’s fight with the dragon
- ii. “Yahweh has become King” and Hebrew grammar
- iii. Enthronement and the eschaton – Paul Hanson
- iv. Lack of evidence for any Babylonian festival

d. Key works related to the Psalms:

- i. *Psalmstudien I: 'Awan und die individuellen Klagepsalmen* (Kristiania: SNVAO* 1921)
- ii. *Psalmstudien II: Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwas und der Ursprung der Eschatologie* (Kristiania: SNVAO* 1922)
- iii. *Psalmstudien III: Kultprophetie und kultprophetische Psalmen* (Kristiania: SNVAO*, 1923)
- iv. *Psalmstudien IV: Die technischen Termini in den Psalmüberschriften* (Kristiania: SNVAO*, 1923)
- v. *Psalmstudien V: Segen und Fluch in Israels Kult und Psalmdichtung* (Kristiania: SNVAO*, 1924)
- vi. *Psalmstudien VI: Die Psalmdichter* (Kristiania: SNVAO*, 1924)
- vii. *Offersang og sangoffer : salmediktningen i Bibelen* [translated: "Song of sacrifice and Sacrifice of song" or "Offering song and Song offering": "Psalm Poetry in the Bible"] (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co, 1951).
- viii. *Der achtundsechsigste Psalm* [ANVAO**, II, 1953, I] (Oslo: 1953)
- ix. *Psalmstudien (The Psalms in Israel's Worship)*, 1962