

# The Shape & Message of the Psalter

**1 Chronicles 16:4**

## Stages & Factors in the Growth / Development of the Psalter

### Individual Psalms

#### Psalms Written for Public Worship

“To the Choirmaster”

... and related indications

#### Various Collections / Groupings

By Author

\***Ps. 72:20**

\***2 Chron. 29:30**

By Genre & Theme

\***1 Chron. 16:4**

\***Ps. 120-134** = Ascents

\***Ps. 113-118** = Hallel Psalms

\***Ps.146-150** = Doxologies / “Hallelujah”

etc.

#### The Five “Books” \*Book 1: **Pss.1–41**

\*Book 2: **Pss.42–72**

\*Book 3: **Pss.73–89**

\*Book 4: **Pss.90–106**

\*Book 5: **Pss.107–150**

#### \*Evidence for this 5 Book Arrangement:

Concluding Doxologies

\***41:13** Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
from everlasting to everlasting!  
Amen and Amen

\***72:18-19** Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
who alone does wondrous things.  
Blessed be his glorious name forever;  
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!  
Amen and Amen!

\***89:52** Blessed be the LORD forever!  
Amen and Amen

\***106:48** Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
from everlasting to everlasting!  
And let all the people say,  
“Amen!” Praise the LORD!

\***Ps.146-150** “Hallelujah Psalms”

Change of Author at the Seams

Royal Orientation

**The Final Arrangement** of the Hebrew Text  
... and its recognized place in the biblical canon

## The Significance of the Shaping of the Psalter

Books 1-2 - principally Davidic

Book 3 - anticipates Israel's exile

Book 4 - oriented to Israel in exile

Book 5 - Restored Israel offers praise to God for her restoration

\*The message of the Psalter centers on David & God's covenant promise to him

\*cf. The Psalter a "hymnal": Yes but....

### Mitchell:

The Psalms tell of the Messiah. Because he loves Torah and meditates in it day and night (**Ps. 1**), the Holy One promises to overthrow every opposition to his rule and to establish his throne on Zion (**Ps. 2**). He comes as the divine Bridegroom-Messiah to rescue Daughter Zion and raise her to honour (**Ps. 45**). He issues a command to gather Israel (**Ps. 50**) and sets up a kingdom like Solomon's which will extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth (**Ps. 72**). However, his kingdom will be attacked by hostile nations (**Pss. 73-83**), he will [be] surrounded by enemies and fall into the underworld (**Pss. 86, 88**). His people bereft of his presence, lament his death, and arraign the Holy One for the failure of his promise (**Ps. 89**). Israel will be exiled and perish in the wilderness, as they were in Moses' day, as Zechariah foretold (**Ps. 90, Zech. 13:7**). But the king will be delivered from every evil (**Ps. 91**) to reemerge from the underworld like a triumphant wild ox (**Ps. 92**). Thereafter YHWH is praised [in his] rule among the nations (**Pss. 93-99**). Eventually, Israel regather to the land (**Ps. 107**), when the Messiah will announce his victory (**Ps. 108**), anathematize his enemy (**Ps. 109**), and descend from the right hand of Power to wage victorious battle (**Ps. 110**). The deliverance is celebrated in the Hallel Psalms (**Pss. 113-117**) which recall the joyful triumph of the Exodus. Then he ascends to Jerusalem amidst crowds and joyful celebrations (**Ps. 118**), while the scattered tribes of Israel, who have strayed like lost sheep, are gathered in (**Ps. 119:176**). Then the Songs of Ascents represent Israel and the nations ascending to keep the Feast of Sukkot in Jerusalem when, in fulfillment of the promise of **Psalm 2**, the Messiah is installed on his throne (**Ps. 132**). **Psalms 135 to 137** are a codetta to the Ascents collection. **Psalms 140 to 144** feature a final attack upon the messianic throne. Evil-doers threaten the new David with force, stratagems, and pursuits, but the threat is now easily dismissed. **Psalm 145** is a hymn of praise for the victory, and **Psalms 146-150** are the grand coda of praise to the entire collection.

### \*Summary:

Book 1, **Pss. 1-41** - The Suffering of the Historical David

Book 2, **Pss. 42-72** - The Reign of the Historical David

Book 3, **Pss. 73-89** - The End of the Historical Davidic House

Book 4, **Pss. 90-106** - Moses Intercedes for the Davidic Covenant

Book 5, **Pss. 107-150** - The Conquest of the Future Davidic King.