

# PSALM 145



GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY  
A JOYFUL JOURNEY THRU THE PSALMS

LEARNING TO PRAISE – July 7, 2024

## I. IMPACT: A Great Psalm for a Great King

- A. Ps 145 delights in extoling God for His great power and great grace shown to the individual, to God’s people, to each generation, and to all creation.
- B. Ps 145 has enjoyed a rich history of usage in Judaism and the Christian Church.
  1. Later passages borrow wording from this one (e.g. Dan 4:3b from v. 13; Pss 104:27-28 from vv. 15-16).
  2. In Judaism it is frequently recited.
    - a. The Talmud guarantees a place in the world to come for the one who repeats it 3 times a day.
    - b. Pss 145-150 are scheduled to be recited each morning in Jewish prayer books.
- C. Christians have historically made much use of it.
  1. It may be alluded to in the NT (v. 17 in Rev 15:3 and 16:5; v. 18 in Acts 17:27; v. 19 in John 19:3). The Lord’s prayer is thought to echo concepts found in vv. 1, 8, 11, 13, 16, and v. 21.
  2. Lectionaries schedule its reading for various holidays, and for centuries in English colleges vv. 15-16 were recited before meals.

## II. GENRE: Modified Hymn of Praise

- A. It is not difficult to see this as a hymn a praise after looking at the heading, “A Psalm of Praise, of David.”

- B. Nonetheless, it doesn’t neatly follow the normal structure for praise songs: opening call to praise, reasons for praise, and final call to praise.
  1. Its deviation from the normal structure of a praise ps is due to the constraints of the acrostic structure.
    - a. Acrostic poems begin each segment with successive letters of the Heb alphabet (22 letters).
    - b. Other psalms of praise which use acrostics include Pss 111 and 112.
  2. In Ps 145 the calls to praise are more indirect, speaking more about how people will praise Him. This serves as an implicit invitation to do so.

## III. SETTING

### A. AUTHOR & BACKGROUND

1. This is the last psalm credited to **David**.
2. There are no clear indicators from the ps as to what period of David’s life it might have originated.
  - a. Talk of God’s kingdom (vv. 11-13) might suggest he wrote it when he was king (c. 1010 BC on).
  - b. But the ps speaks of God’s kingdom in terms of its universal sovereignty, not just over Israel.

### B. PLACEMENT

1. It closes the final collection of David’s pss (138-145). Most of these are laments or contain laments. Pss 138 and 145 bracket the collection with stirring songs of thanks and praise.
2. Ps 145 is a prelude to Pss 146-150, the Final **Hallel**.

III. **STRUCTURE:** The structure of Psalm 145 is beautifully constructed with two layers of structure.

A. **Flow of Thought:** See visual outline chart (next page).

### B. Acrostic Structure

1. This is the 8<sup>th</sup> and final acrostic psalm. Others include Pss 9/10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, & 119.
2. The acrostic spans (almost?) the entire alphabet.

VERSE #	1 <sup>ST</sup> LETTER OF 1 <sup>ST</sup> WORD	LETTER ORDER	SPECIAL NOTES
<i>Heading</i>	<i>n. a.</i>	<i>n. a.</i>	<i>The Heading is not part of the acrostic</i>
v. 1	א (aleph)	1	There are 22 Hebrew letters, but one letter ( <i>nun</i> ) is missing in the acrostic in the main tradition of Hebrew manuscripts, the Masoretic Text. If this represents the original text, then Ps 145 is another broken acrostic (cf. Pss 9-10, 25, 34, and 37). The purpose for the brokenness here might be to suggest the impossibility of enumerating all the praise for which God is worthy.
v. 2	ב (beyth)	2	
v. 3	ג (gimel)	3	
v. 4	ד (daleth)	4	
v. 5	ה (hey)	5	
v. 6	ו (waw)	6	
v. 7	ז (zayin)	7	
v. 8	ח (cheth)	8	
v. 9	ט (teth)	9	
v. 10	י (yod)	10	
v. 11	כ (kaph)	11	
v. 12	ל (lamed)	12	
v. 13ab	מ (mem)	13	
<b>v. 13cd</b>	<b>נ (nun)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Missing Letter Verse in Some Traditions</b>
v. 14	ס (samech)	15	There is another ancient tradition (found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and key ancient translations) that includes a <i>nun</i> verse, placed between vv. 13 and 14. The additional lines may be translated:
v. 15	ע (‘ayin)	16	
v. 16	פ (peh)	17	
v. 17	צ (tzadey)	18	
v. 18	ק (qoph)	20	
v. 19	ר (resh)	20	
v. 20	ש (sin)	21	
v. 21	ת (taw)	22	

### THE ACROSTIC IN PSALM 145

Psalm 145 is an acrostic poem. In acrostic poems the first word of segments begins with each successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Acrostics often suggest a sense of comprehensiveness. This song of praise, full of numerous grand declarations of God’s greatness and goodness, attempts to cover all the bases. The numerous instances of “all” and “every” reinforce the sense of totality. The acrostic gives voice to David’s full hearted desire to praise God.

The chart below shows how almost each verse of the poem begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The rows in yellow indicate unusual or important features in the acrostic. The Special Notes in the right column explain some of these details.

#### IV. Comments

##### A. Key Words & Concepts

- Terms for Praise:** There are **16** references to praise! (praise, extol, bless, speak, eagerly utter, shout joyfully, give thanks, and make known)
- Sense of Totality:** In addition to the acrostic which covers everything “from A-Z,” there are (up to) 19 instances of the Heb. word for “all” or “every.”
- Godward Focus:** There are 14 references to God.
  - “Your name” or “His name” = 10 times
  - “LORD” (Yahweh) = 3 times
  - “My God” = once

##### B. Declarative Praise:

Ps 145 says much about Who Yahweh is and what Yahweh has done.

- Eleven statements about Who Yahweh Is. (vv. 3, 8, 9, 13, 17)
- Eight of nine general statements about His works (vv. 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13b, 17)
- A cluster of seven specific statements about what Yahweh does (vv. 14, 19, 20)

##### C. Person Switching:

The psalm shifts frequently from the speaking of the psalmist to the people, and from speaking to God to speaking about God.

- The ps opens with David own commitment to praise (vv. 1-2), moves on to speaking of the praise from God’s people (v. 10), and concludes with calling on all humanity to praise (v. 21).
- The psalm sometimes prays directly to God (vv. 1-2, 4-7, 10-13a, 15-16) but almost as often speaks about Him (vv. 3, 8-9, 13b-14, 17-21).
- The switching from prayer to declaration marks some of the subsections within the poem.

**D. Prayer without Ceasing:** David’s commitment in vv. 1-2 foreshadows the counsel of Paul in 1 Thess. 5:16-18.

**E. Unsearchable Greatness:** Verse 3 may be rendered: Yahweh is great and very praiseworthy, and there is no searching out His greatness.

When humans utter words of praise for God, it is as though they are drawing a sunset with only a pencil. They can talk about the Lord’s greatness, and they must, but they will never be able to describe or to define it in its fullness. Their best efforts can only point in the direction of his perfections. — Daniel Estes

**F. Great Power:** One of the word plays in the Heb. text is the rhyme of the words for “greatness” (*gedulah*, vv. 3, 6) and “mighty acts/power” (*geburah*, vv. 4, 12). God’s greatness is profoundly seen in His saving acts.

**G. Generational Blessing:** The psalmist anticipates future generations blessing and praising God (vv. 4-7) not only because what He did in the past was so memorable but also because He continues in His faithfulness to each generation. Our God continues to work wonders in this world He has made and is redeeming to Himself.

PSALM 145 <small>© 2024 M. Scott Bashor</small>		Purpose: David arranges an acrostic psalm to offer a crescendo of praise for Yahweh as the great King. He is unsurpassed in power and goodness to David, to successive generations of His covenant people, and to all the world.			Type: Modified Psalm of Praise with Acrostic (see other chart) Author: David (c. 1040-970 BC) Date: Unknown Placement: The close to the last collection of Davidic psalms (Pss 138-145) and preface to the Final Hallel (Pss 146-150).			
HEADINGS v. 0	OPENING PLEDGE OF PRAISE TO THE KING vv. 1-2	THE COMMUNITY’S CELEBRATION OF YAHWEH’S GREATNESS & GOODNESS vv. 3-9		ANTICIPATION OF PRAISE TO THE KING v. 10	THE COMMUNITY’S AND CREATION’S CELEBRATION OF YAHWEH’S GREATNESS AND GOODNESS vv. 11-20		FINAL PLEDGE OF PRAISE TO YAHWEH v. 21	
Song Type Song of Praise	David’s Continual Praise vv. 1-2	Communal Celebration of Yahweh’s Greatness vv. 3-7	Communal Celebration of Yahweh’s Goodness vv. 8-9	Praise from All Yahweh’s Works v. 10a	The Greatness of Yahweh’s Kingdom vv. 11-13	The Goodness of Yahweh’s Kingdom vv. 13cd-20		David’s Resolve to Praise Yahweh v. 21a
Authorship David	David’s Resolve to Praise God as King Ceaselessly v. 1  David’s Resolve to Praise God Daily v. 2	Declarative Celebration of His Greatness v. 3  Generational Communication of His Greatness vv. 4-7  <i>Passing Down the Heritage of God’s Praiseworthiness</i> v. 4  <i>David’s Commitment to Promote Praise in the Next Generation</i> vv. 5-7	The Ancient Creed of Yahweh’s Grace v. 8  Yahweh’s Ongoing Grace over All His Works v. 9	Praise from Yahweh’s People v. 10b	Testimony about Yahweh’s Glorious Kingship vv. 11-12  Exultation in Yahweh’s Endless Universal Kingdom v. 13ab	Goodness Described Generally: Faithful & Kind [v. 13cd]  Goodness Described with Details vv. 14-17  <i>Lifting up the Weak</i> v. 14  <i>Supplying Food to All Creatures</i> vv. 15-16	Goodness Described Generally: Righteous & Good v. 17  Goodness Described with Details vv. 18-20  <i>Answering All Who Call on Him</i> vv. 18-19  <i>Preserving Those Who Love Him</i> v. 20a  <i>Destroying Those Who Turn from Him</i> v. 20b	Hope of Worldwide Praise to Yahweh v. 21b