

A Form Critical Breakdown of the Psalms[†]

I. Laments/Complaints

Form:

Element	Psalm 142
<i>Address</i>	vv. 1-2
<i>Complaint</i> (<i>Trust</i>)	vv. 3-4 v. 5
<i>Petition</i>	vv. 6-7a
<i>Motivation</i> (<i>Assurance</i>)	(mixed with petition) v. 7b
<i>Conclusion</i>	—

Types:

Individual Laments (Pss 142, 13, 6, 102, 26, etc.)
Community Laments (Pss 74, 79, 80, *89)

Subtypes:

Penitential Psalms (Pss 51, etc.)

II. Thanksgiving Psalms [= Hymns of Declarative Praise]

Form:

Element	Psalm 116
Introduction	vv. 1-2
Report of Past Complaint	v. 3
Report of Deliverance	vv. 4-11
Exhortation	(v. 15)
Conclusion	vv. 12-19

Types:

Individual Thanksgiving Psalms (Pss 116, 34, 41, 18)
Community Thanksgiving Psalms (Pss 107, 124)

III. Hymns [= Hymns of Descriptive Praise]

Form:

Element	Psalm 113
Call to Praise	vv. 1-3
Cause of Praise	vv. 4-9a
God's Actions	
God's Attributes	
Conclusion to Praise	v. 9b

Examples: Pss 117, 150, 8, 145, 113, 100, etc.

Subtypes:

Enthronement /Yahweh Malak Psalms (Pss 47, 96)
Songs of Zion (Pss 48, 76)
Historical Psalms (Pss 105, 106)

IV. Minor Types

Royal Psalms (Pss 2, 18, 72, 89, 110)

Wisdom Psalms (Pss 1, 32, 37, 119)

[†] Prepared by Tyler F. Williams (2003).