

## Worksheet 4: Hebrew Poetry / Psalms - Books I - II

- You will remember from lit. class in H.S. that there are lots of different kinds of poetry in the West. Much (but certainly not all) of our poetry is characterized by a defined cadence to each line (meter) with alternate lines ending with sounds that rhyme. Hebrew poetry doesn't work that way. Some characteristics of Hebrew poetry get lost in translation. But, as you read biblical poetry, what characteristics do you notice?

Which of these characteristics are quite distinct from English or western poetry? And, which characteristics have some similarity with western poetry?

- When most folks think of the Psalter, they think of “hymns” and “praise.” And for good reason—the title of the collection is תְּהִלִּים *tehillim* = “praise songs.” But as you read through the five books that comprise the Psalter, you'll come across quite a few “songs” that make some Christians uncomfortable. “We don't talk to God that way” I've heard some say.

The laments give voice to a grieving heart—either of an individual, or of a whole community. As you read through the laments in the Psalter and elsewhere (e.g., 2 Sam. 1.17-27) take note of the characteristic elements or components of the laments.

And as you read them, reflect on what the Christian community has lost as we ignore this part of our Bible. What are some ways we might constructively reintroduce the faith community to lament? And what might be some benefits?

- Read *IOTPB* pp. 19-78 and write up an interactive review
- Read *IOT* on Psalms
- Read *IP* on Psalms (pp. 22-68)
- Read Psalm Book I & II (1-72), each at one sitting and write up your reflections and insights