

Ephrata Community Church
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Apologetics Conference

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BREAKOUT SESSION

Structure and Meaning in the Biblical Text:

*More Examples of How Biblical Literary Structure Communicates
Theological Meaning*

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This New Life

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CENTRAL POSITION OF THE LAW WITHIN THE PENTATEUCH (GENESIS 1:1-JOSHUA 24:33)

- 1 **Primeval history; the nations settling in their lands** (Gen 1-11)
 - The nations receive their allotted territories
 - The nations' territories (גְבוּלָם, *gebûl*) are according to their families (לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם, *lemišpehōtām*)
 - Introduction of Israel's forefathers in Mesopotamia: Terah, Nahor, Abraham (Gen 11)
- 2 **Abraham:** God's promise to give (נָתַן, *nātan*) Canaan to Abraham's descendants made (Gen 12:1-21:7)
 - Land of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, etc., promised (Gen 15:20-21)
 - Abraham builds altar in Shechem; lives in area between Bethel and Ai; Hebron
 - Military victory against enemy from north; sudden attack, pursuit past Dan
- 3 **Isaac** and the death of Israel's founding father, Abraham (Gen 21:8-28:4)
 - Theme of death: Sarah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac (almost)
 - Theme of blessing: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Esau
 - Abraham ascends Moriah; promise threatened but sees God's provision for Isaac; God swears to bless descendants
- 4 **Jacob:** A story illustrating the evils of social and family discord (Gen 28:5-37:1)
 - Story of social and family strife, murder, lying, theft, abuse of aliens, etc.
 - Plight of unloved wife, hired man; younger and older siblings; birthright
- 5 **Joseph:** A story of how God rewards faithful obedience (Gen 37:2-50:26)
 - Theme of faithfulness rewarded
 - Theme of disobedience punished
- 6 **Exodus from Egypt:** God saves Israel in a foreign land (Exod 1:1-13:16)
 - Host king fears Israel is too numerous
 - Calls magicians to oppose, but fails
- 7 **Failure and divine grace in the wilderness** (Exod 13:17-19:2)
 - Nation in migration; journey halted; arrival at Sinai; meeting Jethro
 - Israel complains (לִי, *lûn*); provision of water from the rock; manna; quail

CENTER: THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT SINAI (Exod 19:3-Num 10:10)
- 7' **Failure and divine grace in the wilderness** (Num 10:11-21:20)
 - Nation in migration; journey begins; departure from Sinai; meeting Jethro
 - Israel complains (לִי, *lûn*); provision of water from the rock; manna; quail
- 6' **Victory in Moab:** God saves Israel in a foreign land (Num 21:21-Deut 3:29)
 - Host king fears Israel is too numerous
 - Calls magicians to oppose, but fails
- 5' **Call to obedience** based on lessons from history (Deut 4-11)
 - History teaches that faithfulness is rewarded
 - History teaches that disobedience is punished
- 4' **Laws for stability and justice in society and family** (Deut 12-26)
 - Laws to counter social and family strife, murder, lying, theft, abuse of aliens, etc.
 - Laws for unloved wife, hired man; younger and older siblings; birthright
- 3' **Moses' final words** and the death of Israel's other founding father, Moses (Deut 27-34)
 - Theme of death: Curses for violating the covenant
 - Theme of blessing: Blessings for keeping the covenant
 - Moses ascends Nebo; promise unrealized but sees God's provision for Israel; God recalls oath to bless descendants
- 2' **Conquest of Canaan:** God's promise to give (נָתַן, *nātan*) Canaan to Abraham's descendants fulfilled (Josh 1-12)
 - Land of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites distributed (Josh 12:8)
 - Shechem altar; battle in area between Bethel and Ai; Hebron conquered
 - Military victory against enemy from north; sudden attack, pursuit past Dan area
- 1' **The nation of Israel settling in her land** (Josh 13-24)
 - The Israelites receive their allotted territories
 - Israel's tribal territories (גְבוּלֵיהֶם, *gebûl*) are according to their families (לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם, *lemišpehōtām*)
 - References to Israel's forefathers in Mesopotamia: Terah, Nahor, Abraham (Josh 24)¹

¹ Adapted and slightly expanded with permission from David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 101. Dorsey sees an overarching structure for the Hexateuch, in which the promises made to Abraham in Genesis are realized in Joshua (cf. Josh 21:45, 23:14).

THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT SINAI (EXODUS 19:3-NUMBERS 10:10)

A The Ten Commandments—and holiness on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:3-20:21)

- Opens with Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai; date specified (19:1-2)
- God's glory on Sinai like cloud (19:9) and fire (19:18)
- Begins with God's presence on Sinai sounding like trumpets (19:16-19)
- Theme of holiness (19:3-25, 20:18-21)
- Commandments about idolatry, misusing the Lord's name, Sabbath, honoring parents, murder, stealing, adultery, perjury, etc.

B The Civil-Judicial Laws—emphasizing moral, ethical purity (Exod 20:22-24:11)

- Focus on moral, ethical behavior; some cultic regulations (21:1-23:19)
- Prohibition against bestiality, "following the practices" of Canaanites
- Prohibition against eating meat of an animal torn by wild beasts
- Use of blood, fat in sacrifices; sprinkling blood for ritual cleansing

C The Tabernacle Instructions—sacrificial altar (Exod 24:12-34:28)

- Instructions for altar, for all sacrifices
- Climax: Priests' ordination prescribed (28:1-29:46)
- Closing narrative: Sin of Aaron and the golden calf (32:1-33:23)
- Israel's idolatrous, debauched sacrificing, with drunkenness

D CLIMAX: TABERNACLE BUILT AND FILLED WITH GOD'S GLORY! (Exod 34:29-40:38; summary in Exod 40:36-38)

"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exod 40:34-35).

C' The Sacrificial Instructions—for sacrificial altar (Lev 1:1-10:20)

- Instructions for sacrifices to be offered on altar
- Climax: Priests' ordination described (8:1-9:24)
- Closing narrative: Sin of Aaron's son's, Nadab and Abihu (10:1-20)
- Israel's sacrifices to be dignified, monotheistic, no drunkenness

B' The Purity Laws—emphasizing ritual, moral purity (Lev 11:1-18:30)

- Focus on moral, ethical behavior; some cultic regulations (17:1-18:30)
- Prohibition against bestiality, following the practices of the Canaanites
- Prohibition against eating meat of an animal torn by wild beasts
- Use of blood, fat in sacrifices; sprinkling blood for ritual cleansing

A' The Holiness Laws—most of the Ten Commandments repeated (Lev 19:1-Num 10:10)

- Closes with Israel's departure from Mount Sinai; date specified (Num 19:1-2)
- God's glory on Sinai like cloud (Num 9:15-22) and fire (Num 9:15-16)
- Ends with silver trumpets sounding orders from God's tabernacle (Num 10:1-10)
- Theme of holiness throughout
- Commandments about idolatry, misusing the Lord's name, Sabbath, honoring parents, murder, stealing, adultery, perjury, etc.²

² Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, 81.

LAW AND NARRATIVE IN EXODUS

(Exodus 19:3-40:38)

Section 1: The Decalogue

- A Narrative introduction:
Theophany on Sinai; people keep their distance (19:3-25)
- B Laws:
The Decalogue is given (20:1-17)
- A' Narrative conclusion:
Theophany on Sinai; people keep their distance (20:18-21)

Section 2: The Book of the Covenant

- A Narrative introduction:
Altar and sacrifice instructions for the upcoming treaty ceremony (20:22-26)
- B Laws:
The Book of the Covenant is given (21:1-23:19)
- A' Narrative conclusion:
Altar built for, and sacrifices made at the treaty ceremony (23:20-24:11)

Section 3: The Tabernacle-Priesthood Regulations

- A Narrative introduction:
Moses ascends for tablets; tells others to wait; Aaron put in charge (24:12-18)
- B Laws:
The tabernacle-priesthood regulations are given (25:1-31:17)
- A' Narrative conclusion:
Moses receives tablets; people do not wait; Aaron leads rebellion (32:18-34:28)

Section 4: The Building of the Tabernacle

- A Narrative introduction:
Moses' face shines from God's glory (34:29-35)
- B Laws fulfilled:
The tabernacle is constructed, detail by detail (35:1-40:33)
- A' Narrative conclusion:
God's glory so intense that even Moses cannot enter tabernacle (40:34-38)¹

¹Adapted from David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 73.

PSALM 51 LITERARY STRUCTURE

Timothy R. Valentino

A Grounds for requesting forgiveness: God's unfailing love and abundant compassion (1)

- ¹ Be gracious to me, O God,
on the basis of your unfailing love;
on the basis of your abundant compassion
expunge the record of my rebellion;
- a Request
b Grounds
b' Grounds
a' Request

B Confession to God of transgressions and sins; a central recognition of the justice of God's sentence (2-7)

- ² Scrub me completely
from (the filth of) my iniquity;
from (the defilement of) my sin
purify me.
- a Scrub me / purify me
- ³ Of my rebellion I am fully aware;
my sin is staring me in the face.
- b Deeply aware of sin
- ^{4a} Against you—you alone!—have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.
- c I have sinned
- ^{4b} Consequently, you are right in what you have pronounced,
and justified in the sentence you have handed down to me.
- d God's sentence is just
- ⁵ Indeed, in iniquity I was brought forth
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- c' I am a sinner
- ⁶ Truly you desire integrity
in my secret thoughts, so
in my inner being
you reveal wisdom.
- b' Deeply aware of wisdom
[v. 6b obscure]
- ⁷ Purify me with hyssop, that I might be cleansed;
Scrub me, that I might be whiter than snow.
- a' Purify me / scrub me

C CENTER: Plea to God for a new heart and restored joy and devotion (8-12)

- ⁸ May I experience joy and gladness again;
may these bones you have crushed rejoice.
- a Joy again
- ⁹ Hide your face
from my sins;
all my iniquities—
expunge the record.
- b Your face—hide
- CENTER OF THE CENTER:
¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and
restore within me an undeviating spirit.
- c Create in me a clean heart
- ¹¹ Do not cast me from
your face;
your Holy Spirit
do not take from me.
- b' Your face—stay
- ¹² Restore to me
the joy of your salvation;
in an honorable spirit
sustain me.
- a' Joy again

B' Vow to confess God's ways to transgressors and sinners; a central request for deliverance from God's sentence (13-15)

- ¹³ Let me teach (other) rebels what you are like
so that (other) sinners might come back to you.
- a Let me teach
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from death, O God—my saving God;
let my tongue sing of your deliverance.
- a' Let me sing [lift sentence; cf. v. 4b]
- ¹⁵ Open my lips, O Lord, and
let my mouth (again) express my praise for you.
- a'' Let me praise

A' Grounds for receiving forgiveness: not sacrifices but a broken spirit and contrite heart (16-17)

- ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would offer one.
You do not take pleasure in a burnt offering.
- a The undesired sacrifice
- ¹⁷ The sacrifice God wants is a broken spirit;
A broken and crushed heart, O God, you will not reject.
- a' The desired sacrifice

Addendum (18-19)—possibly added later to correct the potential impression that sacrifices are no longer important or necessary in Israel

¹⁸ Be pleased to show favor to Zion; / rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. / ¹⁹ Delight once more and sacrifices offered in righteousness, / in burnt offerings and offerings given wholly to you. / May bulls once more be offered on your altar.

PSALM 22 LITERARY STRUCTURE

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I. ENGLISH TEXT (NIV 1984)

For the director of music.
To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning."
A psalm of David.

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from the words of my groaning?
² O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, and am not silent.
³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the praise of Israel.
⁴ In you our fathers put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.
⁵ They cried to you and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not disappointed.
⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by men and despised by the people.
⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads:
⁸ "He trusts in the LORD;
let the LORD rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him."
⁹ Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you
even at my mother's breast.
¹⁰ From birth I was cast upon you;
from my mother's womb you have been my God.
¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.
¹² Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.
¹³ Roaring lions tearing their prey
open their mouths wide against me.
¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted away within me.
¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.
¹⁶ Dogs have surrounded me;

a band of evil men has encircled me,
they have pierced my hands and my feet.
¹⁷ I can count all my bones;
people stare and gloat over me.
¹⁸ They divide my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothing.
¹⁹ But you, O LORD, be not far off;
O my Strength, come quickly to help me.
²⁰ Deliver my life from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dogs.
²¹ Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.
²² I will declare your name to my brothers;
in the congregation I will praise you.
²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
²⁴ For he has not despised or disdained
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.
²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great
assembly;
before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.
²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied;
they who seek the LORD will praise him—
may your hearts live forever!
²⁷ All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,
²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.
²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—
those who cannot keep themselves alive.
³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.
³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness
to a people yet unborn—
for he has done it.

II. LITERARY STRUCTURE

A God's abandonment, rule, and the praise of Israel: 'You are enthroned as the Holy One' (v 1-5)

B Public scorn because of God's apparent desertion of the afflicted one: 'He trusts in the Lord' (v. 6-10)

C Appeal to God for help against the bulls and the lions: 'Do not be far off' (v. 11-13)

D CENTER: Trust in God's sovereignty amidst the dire situation: 'You lay me in the dust of death' (v. 14-18)

C' Appeal to God for help against the dogs, the lions, and the oxen: 'Do not be far off' (v.19-21)

B' Public praise because of God's attentiveness to the cry of the afflicted one: 'He has listened to his cry' (v. 22-26)

A' God's presence, rule, and the praise of all nations: 'All who go down to the dust will kneel before him' (v. 27-31)

III. THE CENTER UNIT OF PSALM 22

D CENTER: Trust in God's sovereignty amidst the dire situation: 'You lay me in the dust of death' (v. 14-18)

Arrangement: Three couplets (a/a'/a'") describing the dire situation, followed by a single center line (b) highlighting God's sovereignty over the ordeal, followed by three more couplets (c/c'/c'") describing the dire situation

a	¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.	First person (I am poured...) First person (my bones...)
a'	My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me.	First person (my heart...) <u>Shift</u> to third person (it has melted...)
a''	¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;	First person (my strength...) First person (my tongue...)
b	CENTER <u>you lay me in the dust of death.</u>	A recognition of God's sovereignty over the dying trial
c	¹⁶ Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me,	Third person (dogs have surrounded...) Third person (a band of evil men...)
c'	they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones;	Third person (they have pierced...) <u>Shift</u> to first person (I can count...)
c''	people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.	Third person (people stare...) Third person (they divide...)

Sense of the Unit: "God, this torture is a living death, but I believe you are sovereign over it—not my enemies."