## **KEYS FOR INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY**

## **GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING THE PSALMS**

- Interpret according to the ENTIRE psalm since it was given as a complete thought unit.
- □ Consider the **occasion** for which the psalm was penned.
- Consider each psalm as its own literary context, but recognize what portion of the 4 x 8 system it likely conforms to.
- Determine the psalm's major sections and find the main point of each as well as the major point of the whole psalm.
- Contemplate the typological and or prophetic messianic implications of Davidic psalms.

## **PARALLELISM IN HEBREW POETRY**

 God used "rhyme of thought," (parallelism) in Hebrew poetry knowing that rhyme and meter are lost in translation, but not thought parallelism

**Synonymous Parallelism**; The second line repeats the first line in very similar or even nearly identical terms

Psalm 24:1 Psalm 19.2

**Antithetic Parallelism**; The second line contrasts the idea of the first line Psalm 1:6 Psalm 37.9

**Synthetic Parallelism**; The second line completes or expands the idea of the first

Psalm 2:6 Psalm 19:7

**Climactic Parallelism**; A word or statement is built upon until a climax is reached on the subject

Psalm 29:1 Psalm 103:1

**Emblematic Parallelism**; A figure of speech (usually a simile or metaphor) in one line is used to illustrate the truth of another line.

Psalm 42:1 Proverbs. 25:25

## **UNDERSTANDING THE 4 X 8 SYSTEM**

4 basic **TYPES** or broad forms psalms appear in.

- 1. **Prayers**; These express the heart desire of the psalmist and are usually in the form of either: Complaints or Dirge
- 2. **Songs**; These were sung by the people in worship to the Lord. Major types include: Thanksgiving songs, Hymns, and Love songs
- 3. **Liturgies**; These were used in the temple worship where 2 or more speakers would participate in response to each other. Some types of liturgies are: Thanksgiving, Instructional, and Prophetic
- 4. **Wisdom**; Psalms which deal not with public worship but with private education. Ps1, 19, 33, 39, 49,127

8 general **CLASSIFICATIONS** or specific rationales in which psalms are authored.

- Lament Psalms; Psalmist cries out to God for help because of some trouble upon him or the nation. Usually, a confession of the Psalmist's trust in God is imbedded in the psalm Psalm 7
   Psalm 26
   Psalm 60
- 2. **Messianic Psalms**; speak prophetically of the person and work of the Messiah.

Psalm 2 Psalm 8 Psalm 22 Psalm 69 Psalm110

- 3. **Testimonial Psalms**; the writer proclaims the wonderful things God has done for him. Psalm 30 Psalm 34
- 4. **Historical Psalms**; the writer looks back on the God's dealings with the nation of Israel. They often compose a "divine commentary" on some past event in Israel's history, giving added insight to that event.

Psalm78 Psalm 105 Psalm 106

5. **Pilgrim Psalms**; also called "Psalms of Ascent," they deal with pilgrimages to Jerusalem and were usually sung by the Israelites as they ascended to the city of Jerusalem for the various festivals / feasts.

Psalms 120-134

6. **Nature Psalms**; God's creative work in nature is displayed in these psalms with His goodness, greatness, and power emphasized.

Psalm 8 Psalm 19

7. **Penitential Psalms**; mostly written by David, they reveal the heart of a truly penitent person, broken over their sin.

Psalm 32 Psalm 51

8. **Imprecatory Psalms**; confusing to modern readers, the writers ask God to reign down judgement on wicked men who have put themselves as enemies of both the writer and God. It is a Godly way for people to handle <u>legitimate</u> frustrations at injustice and wickedness. It is asking God to, "not hold back thy vengeance" and repay them according to their deeds. Psalm 58

Psalm 109