

Psalm 21-30 choral reading

CHARACTERS: David, Asaph, Antagonist, group A, group B, All,

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes/page

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Psalm 21-30 (HCSB)

NOTE: Some choral readings use two groups, sometimes to draw attention to Hebrew parallelism. Parallelism is a main feature of Hebrew poetry. To the English reader it appears as a balanced repetition:

One example is in Psalm 24:1-2

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the waters.

The symmetrical arrangement of parallel lines of about the same length are called "cola" or "stichs". The meaning, grammar, syntax, form, and stress balance and reinforce one another. The cadence of the Psalms even in translation is effected by parallelism. Specific words that may be ambiguous or used in unusual ways can be clarified or more narrowly defined by seeing them in the context of a parallel structure. Parallel lines may be synonymous or compare and contrast.

Psalm 21

ASAPH: The king rejoices in your strength, Lord.
ALL: How great is his joy in the victories you give!
ASAPH: You have granted him his heart's desire
ALL: and have not withheld the request of his lips.
ASAPH: You came to greet him with rich blessings
ALL: and placed a crown of pure gold on his head.
ASAPH: He asked you for life, and you gave it to him—
ALL: length of days, for ever and ever.
ASAPH: Through the victories you gave, his glory is great;
ALL: you have bestowed on him splendor and majesty.
ASAPH: Surely you have granted him unending blessings
ALL: and made him glad with the joy of your presence.
ASAPH: For the king trusts in the Lord;
ALL: through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken.
ASAPH: Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies;
ALL: your right hand will seize your foes.
ASAPH: When you appear for battle,
ALL: you will burn them up as in a blazing furnace.
ASAPH: The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath,
ALL: and his fire will consume them.
ASAPH: You will destroy their descendants from the earth,
ALL: their posterity from mankind.
ASAPH: Though they plot evil against you

ALL: and devise wicked schemes, they cannot succeed.

ASAPH: You will make them turn their backs

ALL: when you aim at them with drawn bow.

ASAPH: Be exalted in your strength, Lord;

ALL: we will sing and praise your might.

Psalm 22

DAVID: (*in anguish*) My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

ALL: Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?

DAVID: My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,

ALL: by night, but I find no rest.

DAVID: Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;

ALL: you are the one Israel praises.

DAVID: In you our ancestors put their trust;

ALL: they trusted and you delivered them.

DAVID: To you they cried out and were saved;

ALL: in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

DAVID: But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people.

GROUP A: All who see me mock me;

GROUP B: they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

ANTAGONIST: (*insulting*) He trusts in the Lord, Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.

DAVID: Yet you brought me out of the womb;

ALL: you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.

DAVID: From birth I was cast on you;

ALL: from my mother's womb you have been my God.

DAVID: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

GROUP A: Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

GROUP B: Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me.

DAVID: I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.

GROUP A: My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me.

GROUP B: My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;

DAVID: you lay me in the dust of death.

GROUP A: Dogs surround me; a pack of villains encircles me;

GROUP B: they pierce my hands and my feet.

DAVID: All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me.

ALL: They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

DAVID: But you, Lord, do not be far from me.

ALL: You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

DAVID: Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs.

GROUP A: Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;

GROUP B: save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

DAVID: I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you.

ALL: You who fear the Lord, praise him!

GROUP A: All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!

GROUP B: Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

DAVID: For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one;

ALL: he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

DAVID: From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;

ALL: before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.

DAVID: The poor will eat and be satisfied;

ALL: those who seek the Lord will praise him—

DAVID: may your hearts live forever!

GROUP A: All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord,

GROUP B: and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,

DAVID: for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.

GROUP A: All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;

GROUP B: all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—

DAVID: those who cannot keep themselves alive.

ALL: Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.

DAVID: They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn:

ALL: He has done it!

Psalm 23

DAVID: The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

ALL: He makes me lie down in green pastures,

DAVID: he leads me beside quiet waters,

ALL: he refreshes my soul.

DAVID: He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

ALL: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,

DAVID: for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

ALL: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

DAVID: You anoint my head with oil;

ALL: my cup overflows.

DAVID: Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,

ALL: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 24

DAVID: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,

ALL: the world, and all who live in it;

DAVID: for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

GROUP A: Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?

GROUP B: Who may stand in his holy place?

DAVID: The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

GROUP A: They will receive blessing from the Lord

GROUP B: and vindication from God their Savior.

DAVID: Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.

ALL: Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors,

DAVID: that the King of glory may come in.

ALL: Who is this King of glory?

DAVID: The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

ALL: Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors,
 DAVID: that the King of glory may come in
 ALL: Who is he, this King of glory?
 DAVID: The Lord Almighty— he is the King of glory.

Psalm 25

DAVID: In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.
 ALL: I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame,
 DAVID: nor let my enemies triumph over me.
 ALL: No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame,
 DAVID: but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.
 GROUP A: Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.
 GROUP B: Guide me in your truth and teach me,
 ALL: for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.
 GROUP A: Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.
 GROUP B: Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways;
 DAVID: according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good.
 GROUP A: Good and upright is the Lord; therefore, he instructs sinners in his ways.
 GROUP B: He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.
 ALL: All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.
 DAVID: For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.
 ALL: Who, then, are those who fear the Lord?
 DAVID: God will instruct them in the ways they should choose.
 ALL: They will spend their days in prosperity, and their descendants will inherit the land.
 DAVID: The Lord confides in those who fear him;
 ALL: he makes his covenant known to them.
 DAVID: My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare.
 ALL: Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.
 GROUP A: Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish.
 GROUP B: Look on my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.
 DAVID: See how numerous are my enemies and how fiercely they hate me!
 ALL: Guard my life and rescue me;
 DAVID: do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.
 ALL: May integrity and uprightness protect me,
 DAVID: because my hope, Lord, is in you.
 ALL: Deliver Israel, O God, from all their troubles!

Psalm 26

DAVID: Vindicate me, Lord, for I have led a blameless life;
 ALL: I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered.
 DAVID: Test me, Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind;
 GROUP A: for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love
 GROUP B: and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.

DAVID: I do not sit with the deceitful, nor do I associate with hypocrites.

ALL: I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked.

DAVID: I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, Lord,

ALL: proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds.

DAVID: Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.

GROUP A: Do not take away my soul along with sinners,

GROUP B: my life with those who are bloodthirsty,

GROUP A: in whose hands are wicked schemes,

GROUP B: whose right hands are full of bribes.

DAVID: I lead a blameless life; deliver me and be merciful to me.

ALL: My feet stand on level ground; in the great congregation I will praise the Lord.

Psalm 27

DAVID: (*confident throughout*) The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear?

ALL: The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?

DAVID: When the wicked advance against me to devour me,

ALL: it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.

GROUP A: Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;

GROUP B: though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

DAVID: One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I see.

GROUP A: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,

GROUP B: to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

DAVID: For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;

ALL: he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

DAVID: Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me;

GROUP A: at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;

GROUP B: I will sing and make music to the Lord.

DAVID: Hear my voice when I call, Lord; be merciful to me and answer me.

GROUP A: My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"

DAVID: Your face, Lord, I will seek.

GROUP B: Do not hide your face from me,

GROUP A: do not turn your servant away in anger;

GROUP B: you have been my helper.

DAVID: Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior.

ALL: Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.

DAVID: Teach me your way, Lord;

GROUP A: lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

GROUP B: Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,

ALL: for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations.

DAVID: I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

ALL: Wait for the Lord;

DAVID: be strong and take heart

ALL: and wait for the Lord.

Psalm 28

DAVID: To you, Lord, I call; you are my Rock, do not turn a deaf ear to me.
 ALL: For if you remain silent, I will be like those who go down to the pit.
 DAVID: Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help,
 ALL: as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.
 DAVID: Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil,
 ALL: who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts.
 GROUP A: Repay them for their deeds and for their evil work;
 GROUP B: repay them for what their hands have done and bring back on them what they deserve.
 DAVID: Because they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord and what his hands have done,
 ALL: he will tear them down and never build them up again.
 DAVID: Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy.
 ALL: The Lord is my strength and my shield;
 DAVID: my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.
 ALL: My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.
 GROUP A: The Lord is the strength of his people,
 GROUP B: a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.
 DAVID: Save your people and bless your inheritance;
 ALL: be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Psalm 29

DAVID: Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings,
 GROUP A: ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
 GROUP B: Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
 ALL: worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.
 DAVID: The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
 GROUP A: the God of glory thunders,
 GROUP B: the Lord thunders over the mighty waters.
 GROUP A: The voice of the Lord is powerful;
 GROUP B: the voice of the Lord is majestic.
 DAVID: The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
 ALL: the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
 DAVID: He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox.
 ALL: The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning.
 GROUP A: The voice of the Lord shakes the desert;
 GROUP B: the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh.
 DAVID: The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forests bare.
 ALL: And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
 DAVID: The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
 ALL: the Lord is enthroned as King forever.
 DAVID: The Lord gives strength to his people;
 ALL: the Lord blesses his people with peace.

Psalm 30 - For the dedication of the temple

DAVID: I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths

ALL: and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

DAVID: Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.

GROUP A: You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;

GROUP B: you spared me from going down to the pit.

ALL: Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name.

GROUP A: For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime;

GROUP B: weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

DAVID: When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken."

GROUP A: Lord, when you favored me, you made my royal mountain stand firm;

GROUP B: but when you hid your face, I was dismayed.

GROUP A: To you, Lord, I called;

GROUP B: to the Lord I cried for mercy:

DAVID: What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit?

GROUP A: Will the dust praise you?

GROUP B: Will it proclaim your faithfulness?

DAVID: Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me;

ALL: Lord, be my help."

GROUP A: You turned my wailing into dancing;

GROUP B: you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,

DAVID: that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.

ALL: Lord my God, I will praise you forever.