

The dark book of the Psalms

Psalms book 3



Asaph opens in Psalm 73 and sets the tone for the book with a crisis of faith

- The first Asaph the seer was a Levite from the time of David in charge of priests who would sing before the ark when it was moved to Mount Zion (before there was a temple)

Yet...

- He sees the wicked prosper
- He feels he served God in vain
- Navigating through this 'crisis of darkness' sets the tone for the whole book.

Asaph's crisis of faith is resolved in God

- He enters the sanctuary and 'perceives their end'
- His perspective changes
- The apparent success and the wicked over the apparent losses of the righteous is seen by faith to reverse
- Asaph finds a peace in God in the longer view or even eternal view

Who was Asaph who sings these 11 songs?

- There are more than one Asaph, one (called Asaph the seer) living in David's time, one in Isaiah's time and one after the exile.
- There are also Asaph's group of Levites who served before the Ark and their descendants
- Some of the content of these Psalms in book 3 is long after David concerning things like Jerusalem being destroyed or events in the time of Hezekiah never happening in David's life and these Psalms could be written by Asaph the seer or any of the other Asaphs
 - It's not a problem, but we don't know for sure which Asaph is meant in these 12 Psalms

Worship in a minor key

**The wicked prosper
Jerusalem is overrun
Where is God?**

The diagram illustrates the 12 notes of a minor key scale (A minor) arranged in a circle. Each note is accompanied by a small musical staff showing its placement on a five-line staff. The notes are: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, a, b, c, d, e.

Psalm 73

Asaph

For I was envious of the
arrogant when I saw the
prosperity of the wicked.

The diagram consists of a central circle containing the text. Surrounding the circle are twelve musical staves, each with a red letter label. The labels are arranged in a circle: 'a' at the top, 'e' at the top-right, 'b' at the right, 'c#' at the bottom-right, 'g#' at the bottom, 'd#' and 'e' at the bottom-left, 'b' at the left, 'c' at the top-left, 'g' at the top-left, 'd' at the top, and 'a' at the top. Each staff contains a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat), with a single note corresponding to the label.

Psalm 74

Asaph

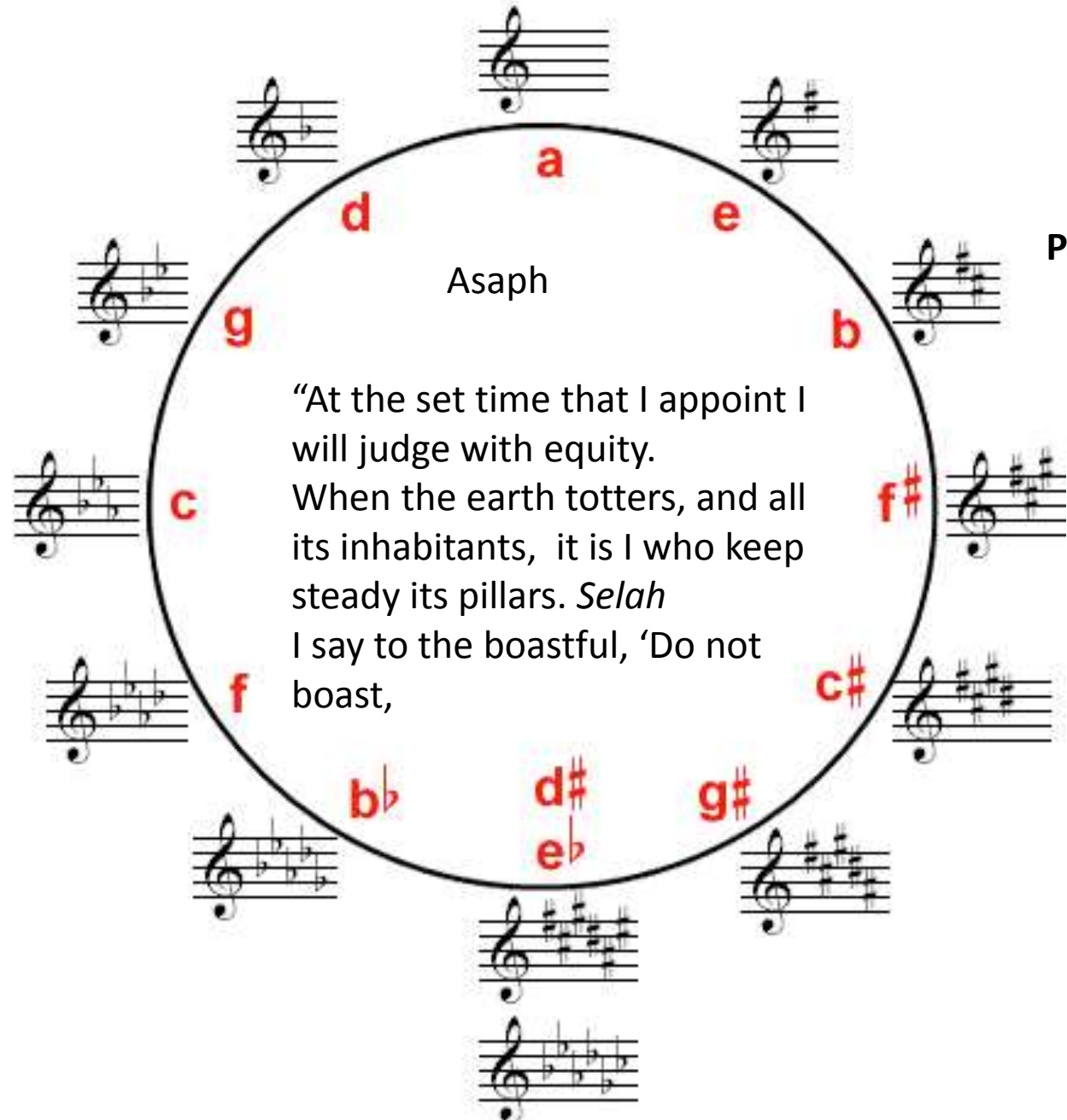
Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place; they set up their own signs for signs. They were like those who swing axes in a forest of trees

The diagram features a large circle with the text 'Asaph' and the verse 'Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place; they set up their own signs for signs. They were like those who swing axes in a forest of trees' centered inside. Surrounding the circle are 12 musical staves, each with a red letter or symbol: 'a', 'e', 'b', 'f#', 'c#', 'g#', 'e♭', 'd#', 'b♭', 'f', 'c', and 'g'. The notes on the staves correspond to these letters, representing a musical scale or key signature.

Psalm 75

Asaph

“At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity. When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. *Selah* I say to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,



Asaph

From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. *Selah* Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant[a] of wrath you will put on like a belt.

Psalm 76

Asaph - Jeduthun

“Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be
favorable? Has his steadfast
love forever ceased?
Are his promises at an end
for all time? Has God
forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his
compassion?” *Selah*

The diagram features a large circle with musical staves and notes around its perimeter. The notes are labeled with letters: a, d, e, b, f#, c#, g#, e♭, b♭, f, c, g. The text is centered within the circle.

Psalm 77

Psalm 77: A crisis of faith reflected on by Habakkuk in his crisis of faith: a Psalm dedicated to Jeduthan also of Asaph

- Will God abandon us?
 - It appeared to Habakkuk and the writer of 77 this was happening (at least at first)
 - The answer appears different for us and Jesus
- “Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?” *Selah*
- No, God will not abandon us
- Yes, God will abandon Jesus on the cross so he will not abandon us
 - ‘He saved others, but He cannot save Himself’

Asaph

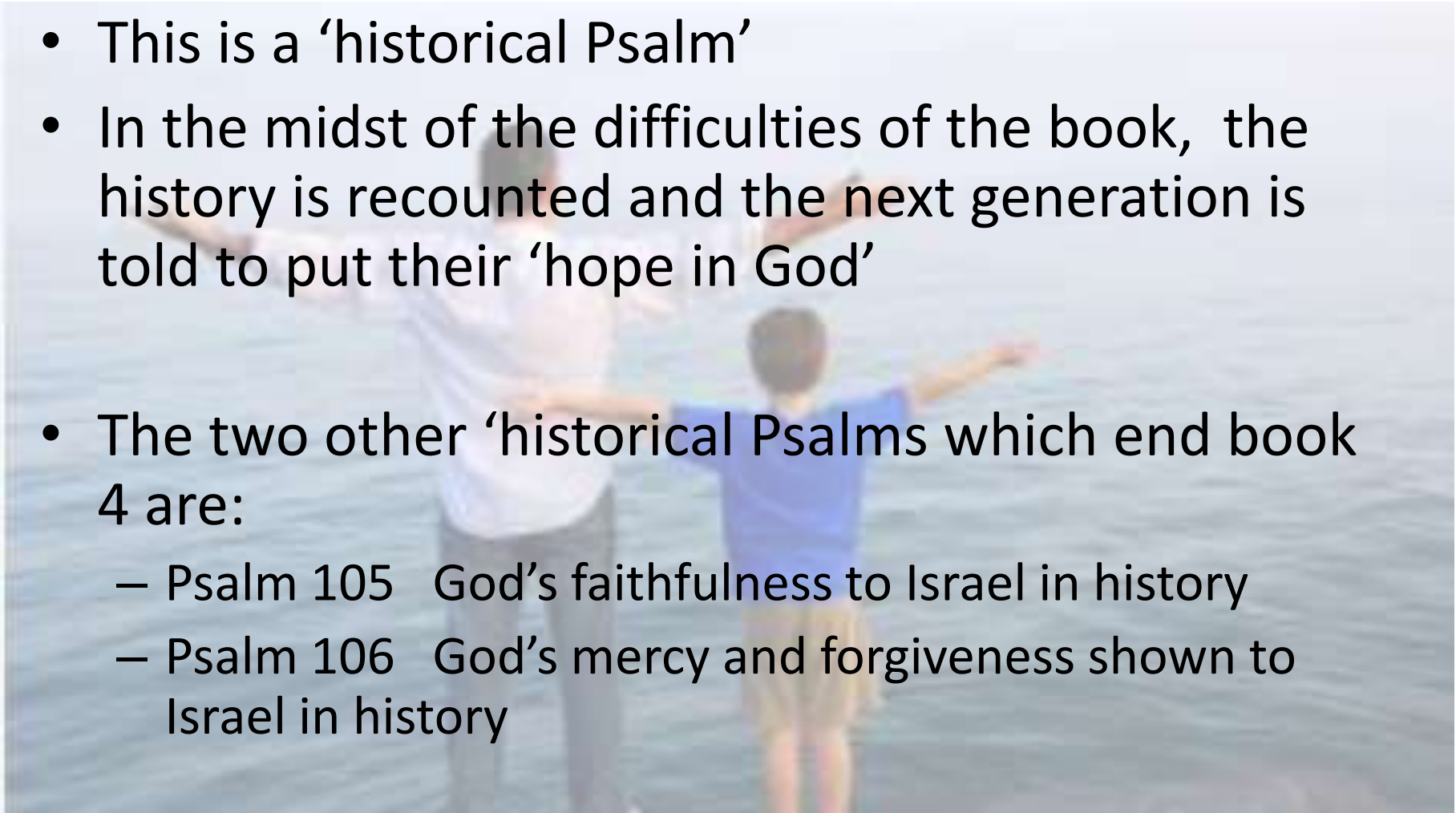
He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God

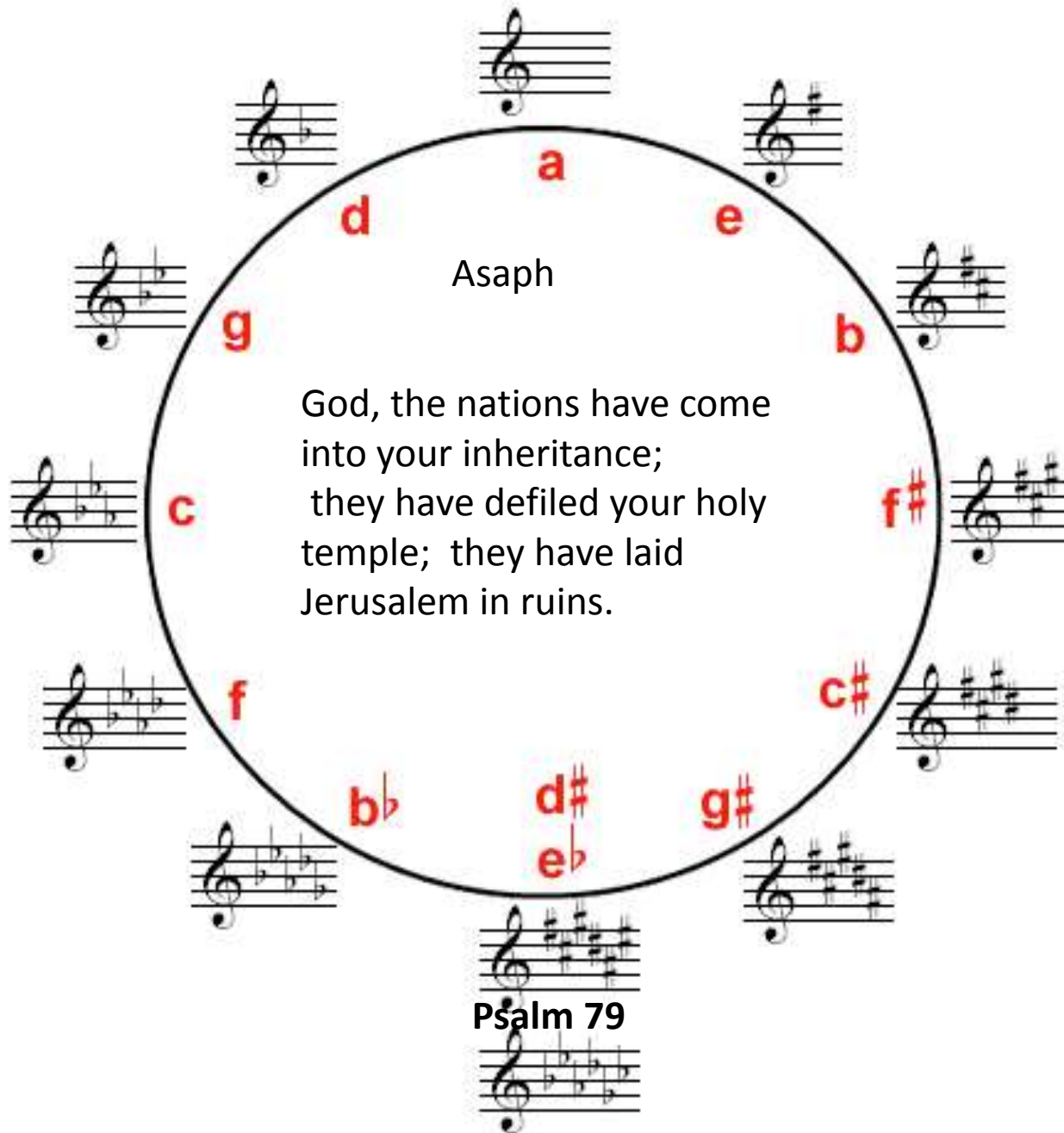
The diagram features a large circle with musical staves and notes around its perimeter. The notes are labeled with letters: 'a', 'd', 'e', 'b', 'f#', 'c#', 'g#', 'e♭', 'b♭', 'f', and 'c'. The text is centered within the circle.

Psalm 78

In Psalm 78, the next generation is told to 'Hope in God'

- This is a 'historical Psalm'
- In the midst of the difficulties of the book, the history is recounted and the next generation is told to put their 'hope in God'
- The two other 'historical Psalms which end book 4 are:
 - Psalm 105 God's faithfulness to Israel in history
 - Psalm 106 God's mercy and forgiveness shown to Israel in history



A large circle is centered on the page. Inside the circle, the name "Asaph" is written at the top, and a three-line stanza of text is centered below it. The text reads: "God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins." Surrounding the circle are twelve musical staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Each staff contains a single note, and the letter name of each note is written in red below the staff. Starting from the top and moving clockwise, the notes are: a (above the staff), e (above the staff), b (above the staff), f# (above the staff), c# (above the staff), g# (above the staff), e (below the staff), d# (below the staff), b (below the staff), f (below the staff), c (below the staff), and g (below the staff).

Asaph

God, the nations have come
into your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy
temple; they have laid
Jerusalem in ruins.

Psalm 79

Asaph

O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be
angry with your people's
prayers? You have fed
them with the bread of
tears and given them tears
to drink in full measure.

Psalm 80

God is on the move. The poetic center of the book of Psalms

The diagram features a large black circle. Inside the circle, at the top, is the name "Asaph" in black text. Surrounding the circle are twelve musical staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature. The notes on these staves are arranged in a circle, with red letters indicating the pitch: 'a' at the top, 'e' at the top-right, 'b' at the right, 'f#' at the bottom-right, 'c#' at the bottom, 'g#' at the bottom-right, 'e' at the bottom, 'd#' at the bottom-left, 'b' at the left, 'c' at the left, 'g' at the top-left, and 'd' at the top-left. In the center of the circle is a square image of a winepress with clusters of purple grapes and autumn leaves in shades of red, orange, and yellow.

Psalm 81

A 'Winepress Psalm'

God is on the move. The poetic center of the book of Psalms

Asaph

When you are stuck
between a rock and a hard
place...

"...But he would feed you
with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the
rock I would satisfy you....."

Psalm 81

A 'Winepress Psalm'

And after many trials in the opening
Psalms of Asaph... God is on the move



The poetic center of the book of Psalms

- Psalm 81
- The center Psalm (9 of 17) of the center book (3 of the 5 books)
- A song of the Gittith
 - from the winepress
 - From a musical instrument, the Gittim (from Gath? Also vineyard)
 - Gittim 'winepress' Psalms by title are 8, 81 and 84
- God is on the move
- A sweet center to an often dark book

Psalm 82

Asaph

God has taken his place in
the divine council;
in the midst of the gods
he holds judgment:

The diagram consists of a large circle with the text 'Asaph' and the lyrics of Psalm 82 inside. Surrounding the circle are 12 musical staves, each with a red letter indicating a note: a, d, e, b, f#, c#, g#, e♭, d#, b♭, f, c.

Psalm 83

Asaph

God, do not keep
silence, do not hold your
peace or be still, O God! For
behold, your enemies make
an uproar; those who hate
you have raised their heads

The diagram features a large circle with musical notes on staves around its perimeter. Red letters are placed at various points along the circle's edge: 'a' at the top, 'd' and 'e' on the upper left and right, 'g' and 'b' on the left and right, 'c' and 'f#' on the lower left and right, and 'f', 'b♭', 'd#', 'g#', and 'e♭' along the bottom. The text 'Asaph' is centered above the main text, and the main text is centered within the circle.

Psalm 84

Sons of Korah

The diagram consists of a large circle with a central image of a bunch of blue grapes. Surrounding the circle are 12 musical staves, each with a red letter note placed between the staff and the circle's edge. Starting from the top and moving clockwise, the notes are: a, e, b, f#, c#, g#, e♭, d#, b♭, f, c, and g. The text 'Sons of Korah' is centered within the circle.

A 'Winepress Psalm'

Psalm 84

Sons of Korah

Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! *Selah*

A 'Winepress Psalm'

Psalm 84

Sons of Korah

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. **11** For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

The diagram features a central circle containing the text. Surrounding the circle are 12 musical staves, each with a single note. The notes are labeled with letters and accidentals: a, d, e, b, f#, c#, g#, e♭, b♭, c, g, and f. The notes are arranged in a clockwise sequence starting from the top.

A 'Winepress Psalm'

Psalm 81 and 84 are both 'winepress Psalms (as was Psalm 8)



A brief look at the flow of the dark book of the Psalms

- Psalms 73 – 83 are of Asaph
 - Many of the Psalms concern laments, even a crisis of faith, pleas for mercy and exhortations as Jerusalem experiences major difficulties
 - Psalm 77 'of Asaph; but dedicated to Jeduthun (quoted by Habakkuk)
 - Psalm 78 is a Historical exhortation for the next generation to 'Hope in God'
- Psalm 81 is considered by some to be the poetic center of the book of Psalms
- Psalm 84, 85 are of Korah
- Psalm 86, is of David
- Psalm 87, 88 are of Sons of Korah
- Darkest part of the 'dark book of Psalms'
 - Psalm 88 is of Heman (who is a son of Korah in the title)
- And a bright upturn
 - Psalm 89 is of Ethan

Note: actually Asaph is also a Son of Korah but it doesn't say so in the title, Samuel was as well and several of David's men and advisers also were

Psalm 85

The diagram consists of a large circle with the text of Psalm 85 in the center. Surrounding the circle are 12 musical staves, each containing a single note from a chromatic scale. The notes, starting from the top and moving clockwise, are: a, b, c#, d, e, f, g, a, b, c, d, e. The notes are arranged in a circle, with 'a' at the top, 'c#' on the right, 'e' at the bottom, and 'a' at the top again. The text of the psalm is centered within the circle.

Sons of Korah

Let me hear what God the Lord
will speak, for he will speak
peace to his people, to his saints;
but let them not turn back to
folly. Surely his salvation is near
to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our
land.

The one Psalm 'of David' in Book 3

Psalm 86

David

Diagram illustrating the musical structure of Psalm 86, showing the sequence of notes (a, d, e, b, f#, c#, g#, d#, e#, f, c, g) arranged around a central image of King David playing a harp. The notes are arranged in a circle, with the word "David" written in the center. The notes are: a, d, e, b, f#, c#, g#, d#, e#, f, c, g.

David sings his song between two songs of the sons of Korah

Psalm 86

Great Is Your Steadfast Love

A Prayer of David.

- 86** Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.
- 2** Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.
- 3** Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day.
- 4** Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- 5** For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.
- 6** Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.
- 7** **In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.**
- 8** There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.
- 9** **All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.**

Psalm 86 (continued)

- 10** For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.
- 11** Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.
- 12** I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.
- 13** For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
- 14** **O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.**
- 15** But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
- 16** Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.
- 17** Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

Psalm 86

The diagram features a large black circle. Inside the circle, the text reads: "David", "Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.", and "Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God." Surrounding the circle are 12 musical staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature. Red letters are placed between the staves: 'a' at the top, 'd' and 'e' on the upper left and right, 'g' and 'b' on the middle left and right, 'c' and 'f#' on the lower left and right, 'f' and 'c#' on the bottom left and right, and 'b♭', 'd#', 'g#' at the bottom, with 'e♭' positioned between 'd#' and 'g#'.

David

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.

Psalm 87

a
d Sons of Korah **e**


g On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. **b**

c
f Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God. *Selah* **c#**

b **d#** **g#**
e

**Sons of Korah,
maskil of Heman**

You have caused my beloved
and my friend to shun me;
my companions have
become darkness.



The diagram features a large circle with musical notes on staves around its perimeter. Red letters are placed between the notes: 'a' at the top, 'e' at the top-right, 'b' at the right, 'f#' at the bottom-right, 'c#' at the bottom, 'g#' at the bottom-right, 'e' and 'b' at the bottom, 'd#' and 'e' at the bottom, 'b' and 'b' at the bottom-left, 'f' at the left, 'c' at the left, 'g' at the top-left, 'd' at the top-left, and 'a' at the top.

Psalm 88

Psalm 88: The darkest lament in Psalms: the song of Heman

- Other laments turn upward
- This does not
- If there a turn toward hope doesn't comes until the next song, Psalm 89



The diagram features a large black circle. Inside the circle, the name "Ethan" is written at the top, and the text "I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations" is centered below it. Surrounding the circle are 12 musical staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature. Red letters are placed between the staves, forming a circle: a, d, e, b, f#, c#, g#, e♭, d#, b♭, f, and c. The letters are arranged in a clockwise sequence starting from the top.

Psalm 89

Psalm 89: The anointed, the seed of David, the Song of Ethan

- ‘I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever’
- Referred to as the ‘seed of David’ three times
- Referred to as the Lord’s anointed three times
– before during and after being forsaken



Spurgeon felt that Ethan may have been the same person as Jeduthun, just a variant on the name.

An incomplete list of conclusions going the dark places of life

- Even through the difficulties tell the next generation to 'Hope in God' Psalm 78
- Even when faced with a hard place God will 'provide honey from the rock' Psalm 81
- God promises 'no good thing will I withhold from those who walk uprightly'
- Jesus went through the dark place for us Psalm 88

A fitting end to a priestly book with an ultimate sacrifice of the Messiah and a hope that 'I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever'

- Most of the Psalmists are Levites
- The book is poetically like Leviticus, concerning sanctuary and sacrifices
- In Psalm 88 the Messiah dies
- In Psalm 89 He is the seed of David thrice and the anointed thrice
- And the dark book of the Psalms find a resolution and despite going through the deepest and darkest part 'I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever'

