

Psalm 51

- I. Superscription (1-2)
- A. To the director (1a)
 - B. A Song of David (1b)
 - C. When Nathan went in to him (2a)
 - D. Just as he went in¹ to Bathsheba (2b)
- II. Opening Plea for forgiveness (3-4)
- A. Show me grace O God, according to Your covenant faithfulness/love (3a) a b
 - B. According to Your compassion, blot out² the guilt of my transgression (3b) b'
a'
 - C. Thoroughly wash me from my evil (4a) a b
 - D. And from my sin, purify me (4b) b' a'
- III. Confession (5-8)
- A. Confession (5-6b)
 - 1. Because my transgressions, I myself, I know³ (5a) a b
 - 2. And my sin is before me continually (5b) a' b'
 - 3. Against You, You alone, I sinned (6a) a b
 - 4. And what is evil in Your eyes, I did (6b) c b'
 - B. Agreeing with God (6c-d)
 - 1. So that⁴ You are just in Your word (6c) a b
 - 2. You are pure in Your judgments (6d) a' b'
 - C. Confession (7-8)
 - 1. Behold, in iniquity I was brought forth (7a) a b
 - 2. And in sin my mother conceived me (7b) a' b'
 - 3. Behold, truth/faithfulness You desire in the inner parts (8a) a b c
 - 4. And in the closed up part wisdom You teach me (8b) c' a' b'
- IV. Prayer for Cleansing (9-11)
- A. Purify me with hyssop and I will be clean (9a) a b c
 - B. Wash me and more than snow I will grow white (9b) a' d c'
 - C. Cause me to hear exultation and joy (10a) a b
 - D. They will rejoice the bones You crushed (10b) b' c
 - E. Hide Your face from my sins (11a) a b
 - F. And all of my evils wipe out (11b) b' a'

¹ Possibly an ironic wordplay with the previous clause. But this verb is so common, it is not certain.

² Cf. Psalms 9:6; 51:11.

³ This horrible English is meant to show the word order in Hebrew, as throughout.

⁴ Either causal (so Williams §366) 'I did evil in Your eyes because Your words are just...' or result expressed ironically as intended purpose (so BDB) 'I did evil in order that/with the result that You are just in your words'.

V. Prayer for Restoration (12-14)

- A. A clean heart, create in me, O God (12a) a b c
B. A steadfast⁵ spirit renew/repair in my inward part (12b) a' b' d
C. Do not send me away from You (13a) a b
D. And Your Holy Spirit do not take from me (13b) b' a'
E. Return to me the joy of Your salvation (14a) a b
F. And a willing spirit support/uphold (14b) b' a'

VI. Testimony (15-19)

- A. Declaring the name (15-17)
1. I will teach transgressors Your ways (15a) a b c
2. And sinners unto You will return (15b) b' c' a'
Deliver me from bloodguilt (16a)
O God, God of my salvation (16b)
3. My tongue will cry out aloud Your righteousness (16c) a b
4. My Lord, my lips will open (17a) c a'
5. And my mouth will declare Your praise (17b) a'' b'
B. The right kind of sacrifice (18-19)
1. For You do not delight in sacrifice (18a) a b
2. And when I give a whole burnt offering You will not be pleased (18b) b' a'
3. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit (19a) a b
4. A broken and crushed⁶ heart O God, You will not despise⁷ (19b) b' a

VII. Prayer for Zion (20)

- A. Do good in Your grace⁸ to Zion (20a) a b c
B. Build the walls of Jerusalem (20b) a' d c

VIII. Vow to praise (21)

- A. Then⁹ You will take pleasure in righteous sacrifices (21a) a b
B. And perfect whole burnt offerings (21b) b'
C. Then they will go up on Your altar, young bulls (21c) c b''

⁵ Established, firm, steadfast, directed aright, cf. Psa 119:5; 57:7.

⁶ Cf. v. 10

⁷ Cf. Psa 73:20

⁸ Cf. Psa 5:13; 30:6,8; 89:18; 106:4; 69:14. etc.

⁹ Logical sequence, not temporal.