



PSALM 100

His Joyful Flock

Translation and Performance Notes

LEGEND FOR COLORED WORDS:

Key term

Emotional exegesis

Imagery

Figure of speech

Proper name

Any other words/phrases

Participant notes

Hebrew text	verse	English Close-but-Clear Translation
מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹדָה הִרְעִיעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:	1	A psalm for a thank offering. Shout joyfully to YHWH, all the earth!
עֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה בָּאוּ לִפְנֵי בְרִנָּה:	2	Serve YHWH with joy! Enter before him with exultation!
דַּעוּ כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ וְלֹא וְלֹא אֲנַחְנוּ עַמּוֹ וְצֹאן מִרְעִיתוֹ:	3	Acknowledge that YHWH, he is God! He made us, and we are his, his people and the flock of his pasture.
בָּאוּ שְׂעָרָיו בְּתוֹדָה חֲצֵרֹתָיו בְּתִהְלָה הוֹדוּ־לוֹ בְּרִכּוֹ שְׂמוֹ:	4	Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise. Give thanks to him! Bless his name,
כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶד וְעִדְדֵּר וְדוֹר אֲמוֹנָתוֹ:	5	for YHWH is good, his loyalty is forever, and his faithfulness continues through generation after generation.

GENERAL TRANSLATION TIPS FOR THIS PSALM:

- To translate poetry accurately and beautifully, a knowledge of both the source language's poetry and the target language's poetry is needed. So, here are the steps we recommend to follow when setting out to translate this or any psalm:
 1. **GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE'S POETRY/ARTS.** Research and analyze many examples from numerous genres of poetry, storytelling, and music in the target language and culture, and document findings. See our [Local Arts Analysis Guide](#) for help.
 2. **GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOURCE LANGUAGE'S (HEBREW) MEANING AND POETRY.** The aim of all our materials is to provide exactly this for the translator, poet/musician/artist, and consultant: an understanding of what the psalm *means*, as well as its *poetics*.
 3. **TRANSLATE THE PSALM IN THE APPROPRIATE LOCAL ART/POETRY GENRE(S).**
 4. **TEST THE TRANSLATION WITH THE LANGUAGE COMMUNITY, SEEKING FEEDBACK ABOUT BOTH WORD CHOICES AND FORM/GENRE/MEDIA OF TRANSLATION.**

TRANSLATION TIPS: PSALM AS A WHOLE

These are the elements that we believe are most helpful to keep in mind during both drafting and checking translations, to help verify that the translation or performance is accurate beyond just a word- or verse-level; just as important is accuracy on the level of a **whole**. Additionally, these are elements that will guide decisions about **performance** in oral translations, songs, poems, or other kinds of art based on this psalm.

1. Overview

The picture below gives a gives a basic **Overview** of the Psalm, answering the following questions:

- **Title-what title best describes this unique psalm?**
 - "His Joyful Flock"
- **Purpose-why was this psalm written?**
 - The **purpose** of Psalm 100 was probably to serve as a guide during part of the liturgy (that is, the ritual performance) of a thanksgiving celebration at the Jerusalem temple. The psalm would likely have been recited by one or multiple chorus leaders (probably priests/Levites) who were addressing the gathered crowd of the people of Israel (see Story Behind below).
- **Content-In summary, what is said in this psalm?**
 - The content combines three central elements in the psalm: covenantal belonging (*We belong to YHWH* - verse 3), YHWH's good character (YHWH is

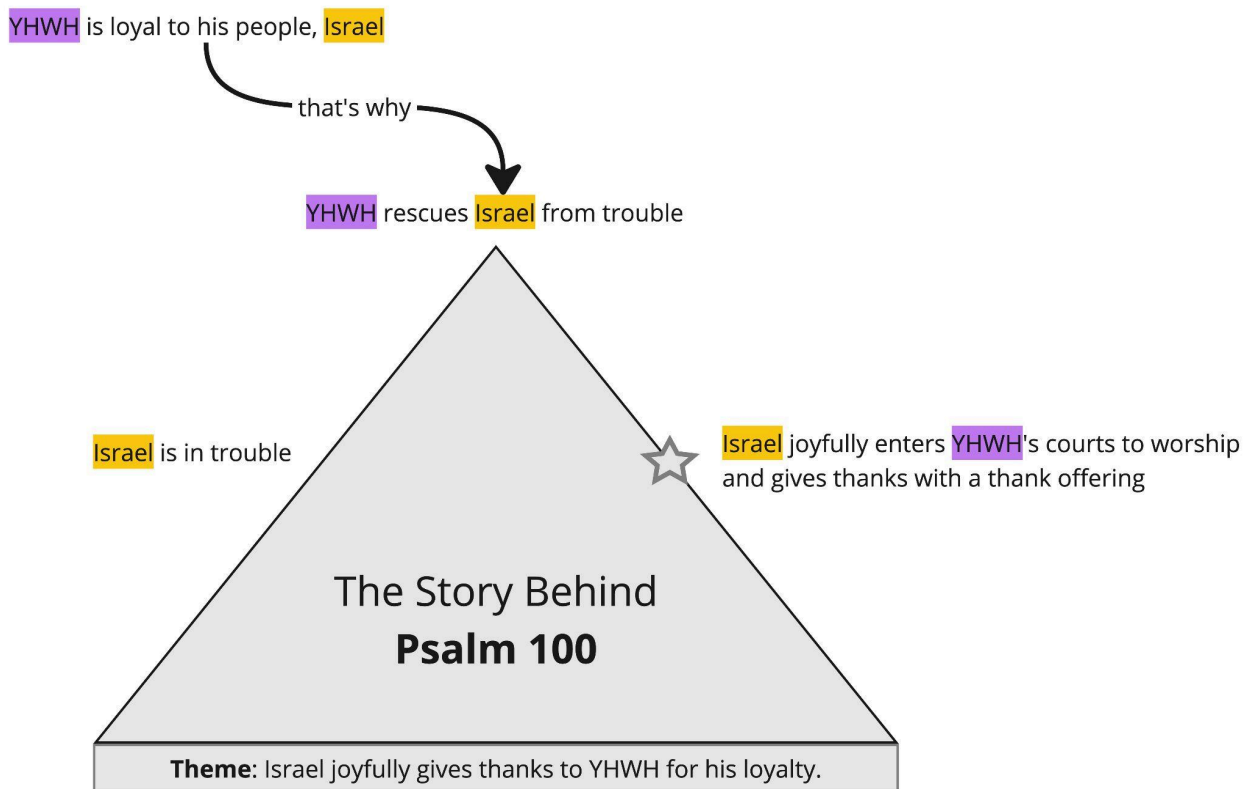
good - verse 5), and the resultant celebration, praise, and devotion (*Serve YHWH with joy!* - verses 1b-2 and 4).

- **Message-what is the general theme of this psalm? What seems to be the main point the psalmist wanted his audience to realize by hearing this psalm?**
 - The message expresses the interplay between the covenantal belonging of YHWH's people and their resultant joyful celebration.

2. Story behind the Psalm

The goal of this layer is to reconstruct and visualise a mental representation of the text as the earliest hearers/readers might have conceptualised it.

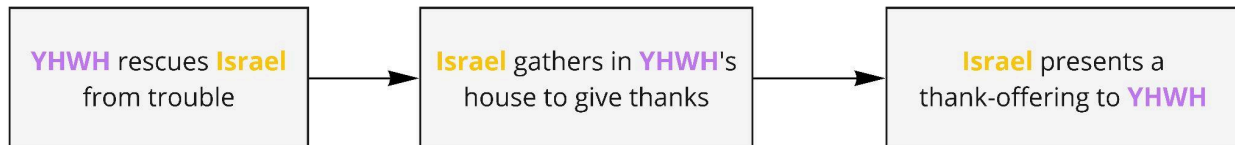
- **Summary triangle-what is the summary of the story of the whole psalm ? What is the main message/theme conveyed by the story-behind?**



- **Background ideas-what are the common-ground assumptions which are the most helpful for making sense of the psalm?**
 - In ancient Israel there was a specific temple sacrifice known as a thank-offering, which would be performed to give thanks to YHWH for his loyalty to Israel and all of his blessings (Jer 17:26; 33:11, 2 Chron 29:31; 33:16).
 - After victory in military conflicts or any rescue from trouble, ancient Israelites would go up to Jerusalem to give thanks to YHWH for his salvation.
 - A temple ritual gave structure to these thanksgiving ceremonies, including a ceremonial entrance through the temple gates (cf. Ps 100:2, 4), songs of

thanksgiving (cf. esp. Ps 100:4-5), and the presentation of a thank-offering on the altar.

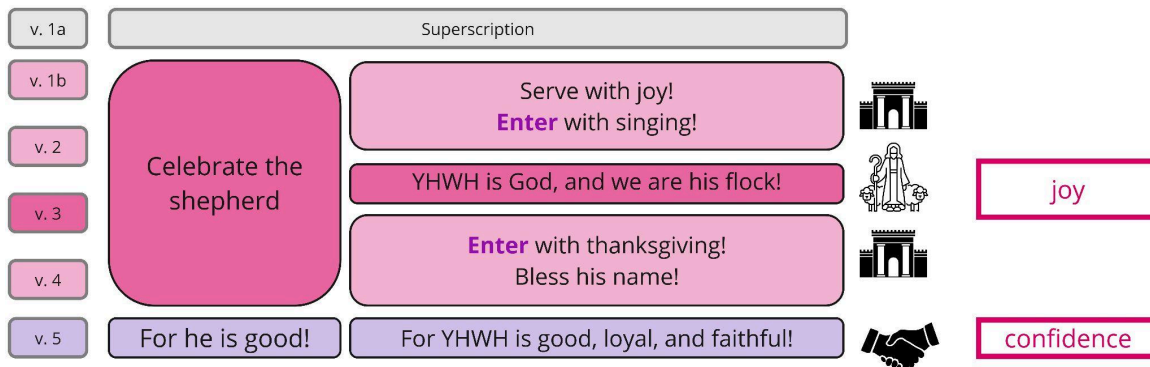
- **Background situation**-what are the series of events leading up to the time in which the psalm is spoken?
 1. YHWH rescues Israel from trouble
 2. Israel gathers in YHWH's house to give thanks
 3. Israel presents a thank-offering to YHWH



3. Layout

Knowing the layout of the psalm by sections helps us to understand the progression of thought as the poem progresses.

The picture below shows the main “chunks” or pieces of the poem. Verse numbers appear on the left. The second column has a title for each section. The large third column contains a brief summary of the section’s content. As you read through the content column, you will see important words and ideas highlighted in similar colors. The icons on the right may be used as memory aids.



Progression-what is the flow of thought and emotion as the poem progresses?

Verses 1b-4 are structured around seven commands given progressively to the audience: shout joyfully, serve, enter (x2), acknowledge, give thanks, and bless. The expectation is to be both joyful and grateful in obeying these commands.

The final section (verse 5) provides the reason for the preceding celebration, focusing on God's character as “good, loyal, and faithful”.

4. Prominence

Prominence-what words, phrases, or ideas are most important in this psalm?: It is also important to consider how the author chose to draw attention to certain parts of the psalm.

Here are the parts of the psalm that we believe are most prominent, and thus should be most prominent in a performance of the psalm.

- **Verse 3** is central to psalm 100 (for at least nine reasons, see our [verse by verse notes](#)). One can see the central position of verse 3 in the following visualisation. The verse is framed by the matching lines on either side of it: *Enter before him with exultation* (verse 2b) and *Enter his gates with thanksgiving* (verse 4a). These two verses repeat the same initial command *enter*, which is the only word in the psalm that is repeated twice with identical form and meaning. The rest of these two lines also closely match each other. The result of this framing is as if there were a gradual incline rising and falling on either side of the peak height of prominence in verse 3.

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מזמור לתודה	1	A psalm for a thank offering.
הֲרִיעוּ יְהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:		Shout joyfully to YHWH, all the earth!
עֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה	2	Serve YHWH with joy!
בְּאֵן לִפְנֵי בְּרַנָּה:		Enter before him with exultation!
דַּעוּ כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים	3	Acknowledge that YHWH, he is God.
הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ		He made us, and we are his,
עַמּוֹ וְצֹאן מִרְעִיתוֹ:		his people and the flock of his pasture.
בְּאֵן שְׁעָרָיו בְּתוֹדָה	4	Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
חֲצֹרֹתָיו בְּתִהֲלָה		his courts with praise.
הוֹדוּ־לוֹ בְּרַכּוּ שְׁמוֹ:		Give thanks to him! Bless his name,
כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ	5	for YHWH is good; his loyalty is forever,
וְעֲד־דָּר גְּדוֹר אַמּוּנָתוֹ:		and his faithfulness continues through generation after generation.

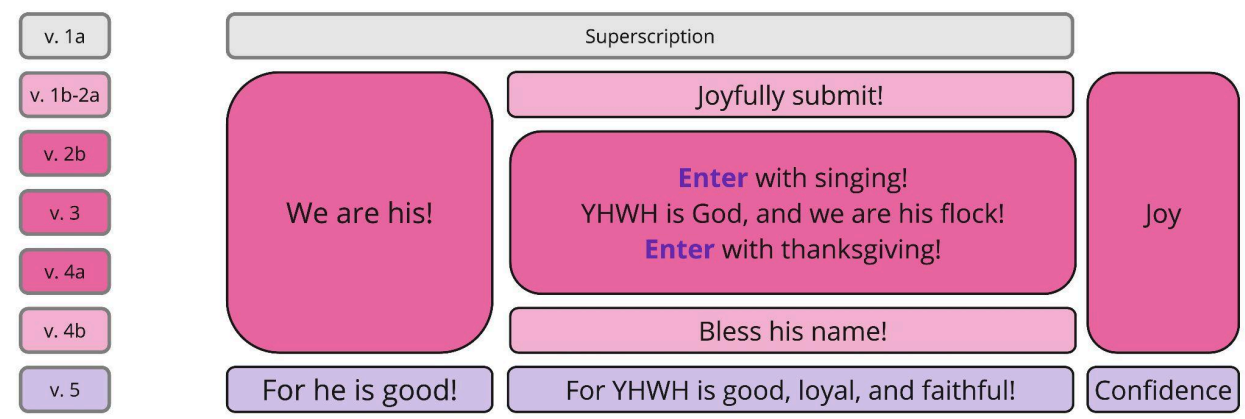
- **Verse 3** contains the psalm's central theme of joy/celebration and the central image of God's people as his flock. This is the only image in the psalm.
- YHWH is prominent throughout the psalm. He is referenced both by his proper name and with pronouns (him, his, he) many times throughout the psalm. This prominence is strengthened by the fact that the whole psalm is a thanksgiving to YHWH.

5. Emotions

Part of poetry is communicating emotion. Each section, and even each verse, can contain a number of different emotions. Here are the main emotional themes of each section:

The dominant emotion of this psalm is clearly joy (e.g. “shout joyfully” verse 1 | “serve YHWH with joy” verse 2 | “exultation” verse 2, and more...).

However the final verse adds to this joy a sense of confidence in the good character and faithfulness of God.



6. Poetics

- **Poetics**—what kinds of artistic beauty did the psalmist incorporate into the poem to reinforce its message? (See Poetic Features video and layer for more details.)

We have two interesting poetic features that bring out the artistic beauty of Psalm 100. Both poetic features follow the structure of the psalm around seven commandments.

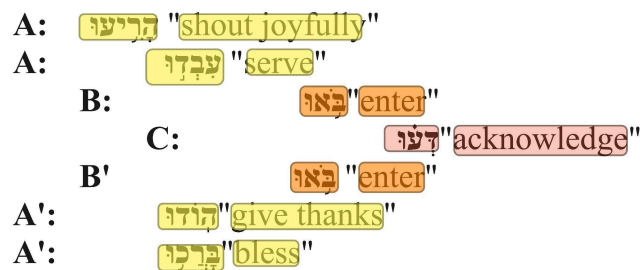
1. Poetic feature: “The Sheep and their Shepherd at the Center”

Verses 1b-4 are arranged according to the structure ABCB'A', with line A parallel to line A' and line B parallel to line B'. Verses 1b and 4c share similar word order and therefore serve as the A and A' lines. Verses 2 and 4ab share similar word order and serve as the B and B' lines. This ordering of the lines, with C (that is, verse 3) sandwiched in the middle, makes line C prominent and central to the psalm's structure. See the table of the prominence section already given.

Chiastic Structure	
	מזמור לתודה 1 A psalm for a thank offering.
A	הִרְעִיבוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: Shout joyfully to YHWH, all the earth!
B	עֲבַדוּ אֶת-יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה 2 Serve YHWH with joy!
C	בָּאוּ לִפְנֵי בְרִנָּה: Enter before him with exultation!
D	דַּעוּ כִּי-יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא-עָשָׂנוּ וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ עַמּוֹ וְצֹאן מִרְעֵיתוֹ: 3 Acknowledge that YHWH, he is God! He made us, and we are his, his people and the flock of his pasture.
C'	בָּאוּ שְׂעָרָיו בְּתוֹדָה 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
B'	חֲצֵרָתָיו בְּתִהְלָה his courts with praise.
A'	הוֹדוּ-לוֹ בְּכֹכֵב שָׁמַי: Give thanks to him! Bless his name,
	כִּי-טוֹב, וְזִמְתָּה לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ וְעַד-דָּוָר יִדָּר אֱמֻנָתוֹ: 5 for YHWH is good; his loyalty is forever, and his faithfulness continues through generation after generation.

2. Poetic feature: "Complete Worship: All that God requires"

Psalm 100 is constructed around a chain of seven clause-initial commands calling Israel to worship YHWH, arranged in the AABCBA'A' where A is parallel to A' and B parallel to B'. The outer lines AA' center on honoring and worshipping YHWH. B and B' lines include matching commands to enter into God's presence. Line C is prominent and has to do with the right understanding one is expected to have about God. The structure of the psalm is thus as follows:



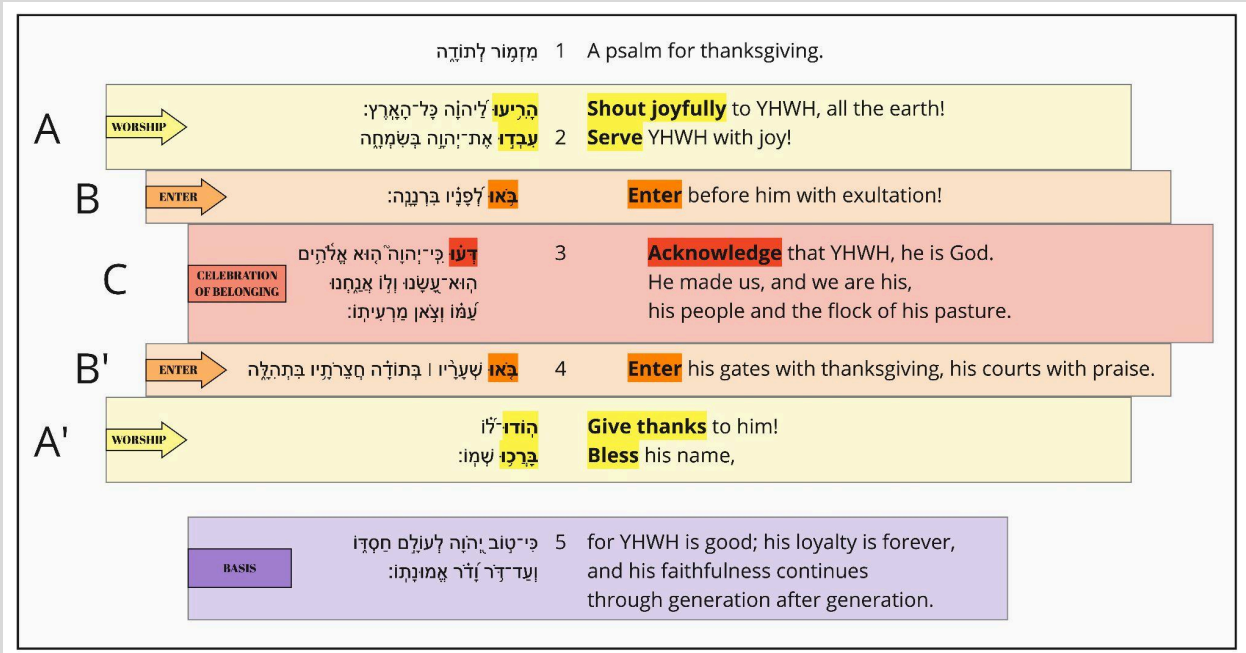
See the table of the prominence section already given.

TRANSLATION TIPS, VERSE BY VERSE

Gray boxes discuss sections and subsections. The headings (in green) are guides, and not part of the Biblical text.

VERSES 1-4: Celebrate the Shepherd!

- The main division in Ps 100 is between verse 1-4 and verse 5.¹
- The main section (verses 1-4) is arranged according to an ABCB'A' structure: line A parallels line A', and line B parallels line B'.² One simple way to display the structure of this section is as follows:



- The beginning and ending A lines (verses 1b-2a and 4b) include corresponding calls to worship: *shout joyfully* (verse 1b), *serve* (verse 2a), *give thanks* (verse 4), and *bless* (verse 4). The corresponding B lines (verses 2b and 4b) include the almost identical repeated invitations to *enter*. This arrangement places verse 3 at the heart of the poetic structure, and ultimately at the heart of the psalm.
- The central theme of verses 1-4 can be expressed in the words “Celebrate the Shepherd,” as Israel joyfully celebrates their covenant relationship with YHWH and expresses that joy through acts of worship and entrance into YHWH's presence.
- The primary emotion of this section is no doubt joy, along with thankfulness, exultation, expectancy, confidence and enthusiasm.

¹ For an explanation of which this division is preferred to other possible divisions see notes in the poetic structure layer.

² This common structure in Hebrew is called a *chiasm*.

VERSE 1

Expanded Paraphrase - the words in *italics* provide a fuller sense of the psalm; the text itself is in **bold**.

After the common pattern of facing danger, crying out to YHWH, and being helped by YHWH, the people of Israel went up to Jerusalem, to the temple, for a thanksgiving ceremony, including joyful songs of thanksgiving and praise and the presentation of a thank offering on the altar. The crowd, including the people, priests, and perhaps a leader or king, gathered outside the gates and began the ceremony with **A psalm for a thank offering**. A leader, perhaps a priest, begins by calling out to the great crowd, "**Shout joyfully to YHWH (in order to celebrate his kingship), all the earth!** For his help and rescue demonstrates his good character, which is reason for not only Israel, but all the earth to praise him.

מְזִמֹּר לַתּוֹדָה הַרְיֵעוּ לַיהוָה כְּלִיהֶאָרֶץ:	1	A psalm for a thank offering. Shout joyfully to YHWH, all the earth!
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- The opening verse of Ps 100 contains important information for the psalm as a whole, and an important clue for understanding the psalm in its original setting:
 - The superscription **A psalm for a thank offering** establishes the setting of the psalm (see below for more detail)
 - The opening line (“Shout joyfully...”) begins the chain of the psalm's 7 commands leading the audience into worship of YHWH.
 - Although the psalm is probably addressed to Israel, this opening line shows a concern for everyone with its call to “all the earth.”³
- The phrase **for a thank offering** (לַתּוֹדָה) probably refers to the presentation of a thank offering (known as a *toda* sacrifice) that was part of an Israelite thanksgiving ceremony. General theme thanksgiving and thanksgiving songs would also have been present for such moments.
 - Modern versions render the Hebrew preposition לַ *la* either as:
 - a) “for understood as the purpose of the psalm. This is our preferred rendering. See ESV, NIV, NASB, BFC, PDV.
 - b) Or “of” perceived as the content of the psalm. See NLT, HCSB, ASV, LSG).
 - The term ‘thank offering’ may require the recipient to be made explicit in some languages. The context suggests that YHWH is the recipient: *offering/giving/saying thanks to God*.
 - For more details on the superscription and its implications, see [The Meaning of לַתּוֹדָה in Ps 100:1](#).
- The word rendered **Shout joyfully** (הַרְיֵעוּ) has as its core meaning the act of shouting or crying out loud.⁴ Depending on the context, this verb can be used to describe two specific kinds of shouting:
 - The first is the shouting of a battle-cry in war contexts, such as at the fall of the city Jericho⁵ or Israel's battle-cry after David kills Goliath.⁶

³ See notes on participant analysis/addressee for detailed notes on whether this psalm as a whole is addressed to Israel, to all nations, or to both.

⁴ HALOT.

⁵ Josh. 6:10, 16, 20.

⁶ 1 Sam. 17:52.

- The second kind of shouting is that of joyful praise or “cheering” in worship contexts.⁷ This is the preferred option.
- The gloss ‘shout joyfully’ thus captures both the shouting and the joyful elements.
- It is important also to emphasize that the word ‘shout joyfully’ is common in the celebration or crowning of a human king⁸ or even of YHWH as king.⁹
- The translator or performer should make sure that his rendering captures this joyful celebration dimension.
- The phrase **all the earth** (כָּל-הָאָרֶץ) is interesting from at least two perspectives:
 - First, it is a figure of speech and should not be interpreted literally.¹⁰
 - Secondly, it is located at the end of the sentence in the Hebrew text, thus open to multiple interpretations:
 - It could be a subtle poetic effect aiming at artistic beauty.
 - This could produce a double interpretation where Israel, just as all the nations, are the addressee.
 - It might finally aim at getting a harmonious line break.
 - Or, lastly, the author of the psalmist might have all the above effects in view.
 - The phrase has been interpreted in three main ways in modern translations::
 - Option 1: Referring to *all the land*, focusing on a specific land/domain (specifically, all the land of Israel). See RSV and ASV.
 - Option 2: Referring to *all the earth*, focusing on a universal/global spatial domain. See the vast majority of English versions. See also LBS: “ô terre tout entière” (“Oh all the earth”).
 - Option 3: Referring to *all who dwell on the earth*, focusing on the inhabitants of all the earth. This is the preferred version. Thus it also refers here to “all nations.”
 - LSG: “Vous tous, habitants de la terre” (“All of you, inhabitants of the earth”);
 - PDV: “Tous les habitants du monde” (“All the world’s inhabitants”).
 - For detailed analysis of this phrase see [The Addressee of Ps 100](#). Although Israel is the real addressee, “all the earth” should be viewed as the “rhetorical” addressee. The psalmist has therefore, all humanity in view as he speaks, but is addressing the people of Israel as his real audience at the thanksgiving ceremony.
- The word order of the command ‘Shout joyfully to YHWH, all the earth!’ may be changed for other languages, notably beginning with the subject. For example, “you all (the people/nation of) the earth, shout joyfully to YHWH!”

⁷ This usually occurs with the preposition ל and is very common throughout the psalms (e.g. Ps. 47:2; 66:1; 81:2; 95:1; 98:4). The joyful and worshipful nature of this shouting is clarified further with רוע רוע being paralleled or joined with רנה rinnâ (joyful shouting/singing Ps. 47:2), זמר zmrw (singing Ps. 66:1), זמירות zāmîrôt (songs Ps. 95), and other words associated with singing, joy, gladness, praise, and thanksgiving.

⁸ 1 Sam 10:24; Zech 9:9. Cf. 2 Kgs 11:12.

⁹ Ps 47:2-3 and 98:6.

¹⁰ For a detailed explanation of how this figure of speech works, specifically as a “rhetorical addressee”, see detailed explanation in speech act notes.

- The preposition to (Hebrew ל) in the phrase ‘to YHWH’ indicates that YHWH is the one being praised/receiving the joyful shouts.

VERSE 2

Serve YHWH with joy (in a posture of obedience to YHWH which comes not from fear but joyful service to a good and loyal master, who can be counted on to help his servants when trouble comes)! (All you gathered outside of YHWH's house and presence to give thanks,) **Enter before him** (into his house and his presence, to begin the thanksgiving ceremony) **with exultation** (to honor his rescue and give him the praise owed him by his people, when he cares for them)!

<p style="text-align: center;">עֲבַדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה בְּאוֹרְלִפְנֵי בְרִנָּה:</p>	2	<p style="text-align: center;">Serve YHWH with joy! Enter before him with exultation!</p>
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- The verse contains two commands in the second person plural: ‘serve’ and ‘enter’. Both commands are addressed to Israel, just like the preceding command ‘shout joyfully’ found in verse 1.
- The first line ‘Serve YHWH with joy’ is all about joyful service. It combines the emotion of joy with the action *serve* (עֲבַדוּ), which has connotations of work, submission, even slavery, as well as worship and devotion. The second line begins the concrete expression of this joyful service with the psalm's first invitation to enter joyfully (that is, with exultation) into YHWH's presence. The second invitation to enter into YHWH's presence is found in verse 4.
- The word translated here as **serve** (עֲבַד) has a very rich range of meaning. Its primary meaning is connected to the general ideas of work and labour (for example, working the soil in Gen 2:5).¹¹ In this verse the meaning is entirely positive, calling Israel to serve/worship YHWH with joy. There are two options for rendering this verb:¹²
 - Option 1: It may be understood as *to work* or *labor* in a general sense: ESV, HCSB, LBS. The command to serve is thus a call to obey just as a slave or servant is to obey and serve his master.
 - Option 2: It may be understood from the perspective of people serving a deity and rendered as “worship”(NIV, NRSV, NLT). BFC has here “*Offer him a joyful worship service.*”¹³
- The word **with** (ב) in the phrases ‘with **joy**’ (בְּשִׂמְחָה) and ‘with **exultation**’ (בְּרִנָּה) describes the internal state of those performing the action. The emotion in both prepositional phrases is that of joy.
 - Exultation refers to “great joy.” as we can see with French LGS which opts for “allégresse.” Translators who do not have a synonymous word for joy may thus render ‘exultation’ as *great joy*. A significant number of modern versions translate this prepositional phrase as “with (joyful) singing/songs.” See ESV, NIV, NRSV, NLT, HCSB, NET and LBS.

¹¹ This can be positive, negative, or neutral, depending on the reason, environment, or nature of the work. In the most negative cases, this word implies slavery, as in Israel's brutal slavery in Egypt (e.g. Exod 1:13), and in the most positive cases it implies joyful service to a good master.

¹² “The Hebrew word used here, a’vad, can describe work or service in general, or refer to honoring Yahweh in formal worship” (Barry et al. 2016, Ps. 100:2).

¹³ Offrez-lui un culte joyeux.

- The command to **enter before him** should be understood also as to “come into his presence” (ESV, NRSV, NET, NBS, LBS), notably in the Temple where he is believed to be present. “The phrase his presence refers specifically to the Temple, where Yahweh was present with his people.”¹⁴
 - A possible rendering of the command is *Enter/come (to the place/house/building) where he is (present).*

VERSE 3

(However, before entering to give thanks, let us establish the foundation of all our thanksgiving, beginning with a call to) **Acknowledge that YHWH, he** (and no other, none of the gods of the other nations who might compete,) **is God**, (the creator of all things. When he helped and rescued us, he showed himself superior over all other gods and powers)! **He**, (this great supreme God,) **made us**, (calling, redeeming, and forming us as a nation for himself), **and** (therefore) **we are his**, (rightfully belonging to him), **his people and the flock of his pasture** (whom he shepherds and cares for).

<p>דַּעוּ כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ וְלֹא יָלְדוּ אֲנָחְנוּ עֲמֹו וְצֹאן מִרְעִיתוֹ:</p>	3	<p>Acknowledge that YHWH, he is God! He made us, and we are his, his people and the flock of his pasture.</p>
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- The verse contains a single command in the second person plural: **acknowledge** (see NET, HCSB, PDV). It may also be understood as to *recognize or confess (a statement or fact to be true)*.¹⁵ Likewise, some modern translations¹⁶ utilize “know”:
 - Some languages may require a “figurative expression” to capture the Hebrew verb, such as “Say ‘Yes’ in your heart” or “Put this word in your mouth.”¹⁷
 - The conjunction ‘that’ (כִּי) introduces the statement and fact commanded to be acknowledged.
 - BFC has here “know-this.”¹⁸ This translation introduces the statement being acknowledged with a colon. Other languages may need to find creative ways to demonstrate the relationship between the verb ‘acknowledge’ and the statement being acknowledged.
- The sentence **YHWH, he is God** is the statement that people are called to acknowledge. This simple phrase has some important elements for the translator:
 - The term **God** is generic, it thus refers to a deity in the most general sense. In contrast, **YHWH** is the personal and covenantal name of God.
 - Translators should not interchange the two terms.
 - The pronoun *he* refers to YHWH here:
 - The construction ‘YHWH, he is God’ may seem strange in English. In Hebrew, the phrase emphasizes that YHWH alone, and no other god of the nations, is God.

¹⁴ Bratcher and Reyburn (1991, 853).

¹⁵ Bratcher and Reyburn (1991, 853).

¹⁶ ESV, NIV, NRSV, LSG, LBS, BFC.

¹⁷ Bratcher and Reyburn (1991, 853).

¹⁸ sachez-le:.

- The translators and performers should seek to bring out this emphasis on YHWH's unique status. This may be done through linguistic and/or non-linguistic devices.
- The verb *make* in the phrase **he made us** should not be interpreted to mean *create* in the sense of God creating humanity at the beginning of the world. Instead it refers to YHWH creating “a nation out of the slaves in Egypt, choosing them as his own people, a people who belonged to him alone.”¹⁹ He thus called, redeemed, and *formed* them as a nation for himself.
 - The translator or performer should avoid rendering the verb in such a way that it is understood as God creating the same way he did at the creation of the world.²⁰
- The people to whom the command to ‘acknowledge’ is addressed are included in the first person plural pronouns ‘us’ and ‘we’. So, these are first plural *inclusive* pronouns here.
- The word **and** (ו) connects the phrase ‘He made us’ with the phrase ‘we are his’. Its explicit function is simply to coordinate the two clauses of the verse, but the semantic context implies that the term functions to indicate result.
 - The translator may render the word ‘and’ here as *therefore* or *with the result that*. For example: YHWH *created us, therefore = we are his*.
- The phrase **and we are his** in Hebrew literally says *and we are to him*. This use of the preposition that most often means to (ל) is a standard way to indicate belonging, devotion, and commitment in Hebrew.²¹
 - The phrase ‘we are his’ may be rendered as *we belong to him*.
- The phrase **his people** may be paraphrased as *the people who belong to him*.
- The phrase rendered **the flock of his pasture** has several important features for the translator:
 - The notion of shepherding in general may be unknown for some cultures. Some modern cultures that know shepherding may do it quite differently from how it was done in Israel. The translator and performers would make sure their translation of terms like pasture or sheep will be understood and meaningful to their audience.
 - A **pasture** (מְרִיעֵית) “is natural grassland, whether in a valley, on the slope of a hill, or in the wilderness where low-growing grasses flourish without the aid of human cultivation”²² where domesticated animals are fed on grass.
 - The phrase of *his pasture* is an image that means *he takes care of* or *he cares for* (BFC, PDV, NBS) the flock. Translators can consider this as a possible rendering to make the meaning clear.
 - The **flock** is a group of animals assembled and herded together.²³

¹⁹ Bratcher and Reyburn (1991: 853).

²⁰ However, this may still be subtly hindered as a possible secondary meaning in light of the ambiguity regarding who the addressee is (Israel / all nations). For further details see notes in participant analysis on the addressee of Psalm 100.

²¹ It parallels exactly the ל preposition in Song of Songs 2:16, (“My beloved is mine [lit. to me] and I am his [lit. to him]”).

²² (Beck 2011: 191).

²³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/flock>

- Many modern versions rightly render it as “(flock of) sheep” which is an acceptable translation choice.
- In contexts where flocks or (flock of) sheep are unknown or impossible to be used, translators or performers may opt for “people” for the reason that the people are compared here to a flock: *The people whom he cares for.*²⁴
- The phrase ‘the flock of his pasture’ refers either to
 - (1) the flock/sheep he pastures, that is, the sheep he leads to where they can feed
 - (2) the flock/sheep that feed on his pasture (NBS)
 - In contexts where flocks or (flock of) sheep are unknown or impossible to be used, translators or performers may opt for “people” for the reason that the people are compared here to a flock:
 - “The people whom he cares for.”²⁵
- The sentence ‘we are... the flock of his pasture’ should not be interpreted literally.
 - It is a metaphor where the people of God are described as being the flock/sheep of the pasture of God.
 - It may be necessary for some languages to make the comparison explicit by using a word such as “like” or “as”: “we are *like* the flock of his pasture”; “we are like the flock/sheep he cares for.”
 - Some modern French versions renderings that may be of interest:
 - “(We are) the flock whose shepherd he is” (BFC).²⁶
 - “He is our shepherd, we are his people, his flock” (PDV).²⁷
 - “(nous sommes) le troupeau qu’il fait paître [lit. (we are) the flock he feeds]” (NBS).

VERSE 4

(He is our God and we are his people! We belong to him! With this foundation in mind, let us celebrate and give thanks for his help and rescue, as we) **Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts (where his presence is most experienced) with praise. Give thanks to him** (with joyful songs of thanksgiving and a thank-offering on the altar!) **Bless his name**, (speaking well of him and celebrating his character),

באו שעריו בתודה תצרתיו בתהלה הודו־לו ברכו שמו:	4	Enter his gates with thanksgiving , his courts with praise . Give thanks to him! Bless his name ,
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- This verse contains the final three commands of the psalm:
 - The first command is a repeated invitation to *enter*, closely matching the call to *enter* in verse 2. The call to enter YHWH's gates and courts could have been sung immediately

²⁴ (Bratcher and Reyburn 1991: 853).

²⁵ (Bratcher and Reyburn 1991: 853).

²⁶ (Nous sommes) le troupeau dont il est le berger.

²⁷ Il est notre berger, nous sommes son peuple, son troupeau.

before, during, or after the congregation actually entered the temple complex to present their thanksgiving to YHWH.

- The final two imperatives are closely related as they call Israel to ‘give thanks’ and ‘bless YHWH's name’.
- It is likely no coincidence that Psalm 100 has seven commands guiding the audience into worship. This seven-verb chain can be displayed as follows:

מזמור לתודה		1 A psalm for a thank-offering.	
1	הֲרִיעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:	2	Shout joyfully to YHWH, all the earth!
2	עֲבַדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה	2	Serve YHWH with joy!
3	בָּאוּ לִפְנֵי בְרִנָּה:		Enter before him with exultation!
4	דַּעַן כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ וְנָנוּ אֲנֵחָנוּ עַמּוֹ וְצֹאן מִרְעִיתוֹ:	3	Acknowledge that YHWH, he is God. He made us, and we are his, his people and the flock of his pasture.
5	בָּאוּ שַׁעְרָיו בְּתוֹדָה סִדְרֵתָיו בְּתִהְלָה	4	Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise.
6	הוֹדוּ־לֵו		Give thanks to him!
7	בְּרַכּוּ שְׁמוֹ:		Bless his name,
	כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה לְעַלְמֵם חַסְדּוֹ וְעַד־דָּר אֲדִיר אֱמוּנָתוֹ:	5	for YHWH is good; his loyalty is forever, and his faithfulness continues through generation after generation.

- The notion of **gates** and **courts** are probably unknown to many cultures. To understand the call to enter YHWH's gates and courts, it is helpful to know the layout of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem:
 - In the Old Testament, a **court** normally refers to a large rectangular space or yard within the walls surrounding the tabernacle or Temple. Worshippers gathered and made sacrifices in the court.²⁸ There were three main areas: (1) the temple building, (2) the inner court, and (3) the outer court.
 - The temple building was separated into 2 rooms. The innermost room was the holy of holies, and it contained the Ark of the Covenant. The outer room (1 Kgs. 6; 2 Chron. 3) contained the altar of incense, the table for the bread, and the lampstands (1 Kgs. 7; 2 Chron. 4).
 - Surrounding the temple building was the inner court, which contained the water basins and the bronze altar for sacrifices (1 Kgs. 7; 2 Chron. 4). There would have been **gates** leading from the outer court into this inner court (Ezek. 8:16), and the inner court was probably higher than the outer court, with stairs leading up to it. Thus it is also sometimes called the “upper court” (Jer. 36:10).

²⁸ (Richards 1999: 193).

- It is much more likely that it is the *Temple* gates and not the city gates.²⁹ The best way to translate the term here is to use a rendering that does not make it specific as to the Temple or the city gates. If this option is not possible, the translator or performer can translate as the Temple gates. In this last option, the translation team could add a footnote explaining that another possible rendering is the city gates.
 - The outer court surrounded the inner court, but was still a holy space where cultic activity took place.
 - Thus, the phrases ‘his gates’ and ‘his courts’ describe things all belonging to the Temple. They should be understood and may be paraphrased as:
 - *the gates of his Temple* and *the courts of his Temple* or
 - *the gates of God/YHWH’s Temple* and *the courts of God/YHWH’s Temple*
- The prepositional phrase **with thanksgiving** describes the attitude expected from worshippers as they enter the gates.
 - It may be rendered using the verb to give thanks: “as you are giving him thanks...”
- The prepositional phrase **with praise** describes the attitude expected from worshippers as they enter the courts.
 - It may be rendered using the verb to praise: “as you are praising him...”
- One of the most central components of the key word **ble^ss** (בָּרַךְ) is that of “speaking well of” another.³⁰
 - In this verse the addressees are called upon to bless YHWH by celebrating and speaking of YHWH's goodness (verse 5a), loyalty (verse 5b), and faithfulness (verse 5c).
 - In the Hebrew Bible, blessing YHWH is almost always intertwined with thankfulness and praise, as seen here with the call of הודו (give thanks/praise) in the preceding clause.
 - For many cultures, a literal rendering of *bless* in the local language will not correspond to the meaning of the Hebrew verb to *bless* here. For example, some cultures do not allow an inferior to bless a superior, as it is the case here. In other cultures, blessing always carries connotations of promising or giving material benefits to someone else. In verse 4, the meaning of ‘bless’ is closer to *praise*: see HCSB, NET, and NIV. Translators and performers should make sure the local term does not mean that the speaker is promising or giving material gifts to YHWH, or that the speakers are somehow superior to YHWH.
- The expression to **ble^ss someone’s name** should not be interpreted literally. It is a figure of speech (called *metonymy*) where a person is referred to as his name.

²⁹ Some arguments in favor of the Temple gates rather than the city gates: 1) They are "HIS gates", the Lord's gates, which would imply they are part of HIS house, which is primarily the temple. 2) The psalm is most likely part of a thanksgiving ceremony (see story behind etc...) which would have taken place in the temple. 3) They are clearly ritual gates, part of a worship ceremony, and worship would have taken place most centrally in the temple.

³⁰ This applies both to God blessing humans and humans blessing God, as we have in this verse (Ps. 100:4). God blesses human beings by speaking well of them, thereby imparting “blessing” (good things) to them, and so they are “blessed” (בָּרַךְ); human beings bless God by speaking well of him, attributing “blessing” (good qualities) to him, and so he is “blessed” (בָּרַךְ)—i.e., praised and praiseworthy.

- If a literal rendering of ‘bless his name’ is not possible or understandable in the local language, translators and performers may consider the renderings *bless him* or *bless YHWH*.
- LBS “louez-le [lit. praise-him]”; BFC “louez le Seigneur [lit. praise the Lord].”
- The general emotion of the verse is that of **gratitude**.
- The performance of the verse may be very effective as it is organized around the three main commands: to enter, to give thanks, and to bless.

Gray boxes discuss sections and subsections. The headings (in green) are guides, and not part of the Biblical text.

VERSE 5: For he is good!

- Ps 100 finishes with a closing statement³¹ providing the basis for the content of verses 1-4 which is a distinct unit because they are all commands sharing many poetic commonalities. More than serving as the conclusion of the psalm, verse 5 is the explanation for all the previous commands.

VERSE 5

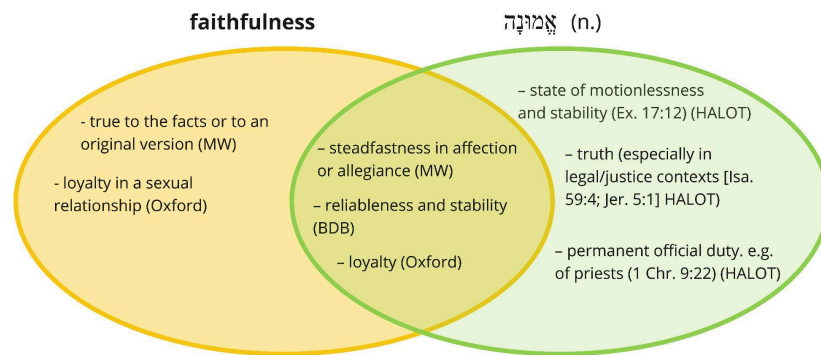
(invoking the phrase associated with thank offerings:) **for YHWH is good** (to his people, Israel), **his loyalty** (to his people, Israel), **is forever**, and **his faithfulness** (to his people, Israel) **continues through generation after generation.** (The people then enter through the gates and into the temple courts and a thank-offering is offered on the altar, accompanied by joyful songs of thanksgiving and praise.)

כִּי טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ וְעֲדִידָתוֹ יָדוֹר אֲמוֹנָתוֹ׃	5	for YHWH is good, his loyalty is forever , and his faithfulness continues through generation after generation.
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- This closing verse of the psalm provides the reasons for everything preceding it.
 - It explains why Israel should be motivated to:
 - shout joyfully and serve YHWH with joy (verse 1-2),
 - joyfully enter his presence (verses 2, 4),
 - acknowledge who he is and celebrate their covenantal relationship to him (verse 3),
 - and give thanks to him and bless his name (verse 4).
 - The conjunction **for** that begins verse 5 introduces three reasons for all the preceding commands of verses 1-4. Each of these reasons contains a Hebrew word order that emphasizes their quality:
 - Verse 5a: YHWH’s character is *good*,
 - Verse 5b: the duration of YHWH’s loyalty is *forever*,
 - Verse 5c the duration (and possibly also recipients) of YHWH’s faithfulness *continues through generation after generation*.
- The first reason is the declaration that **YHWH is good**.

³¹ More precisely כִּי ki a statement.

- For languages where the adjective *good* cannot be used for humans, translators or performers may paraphrase the declaration as:
 - “YHWH is a good person.”
 - “YHWH does (what is) good (to his people).”
- This affirmation was one of the most common refrains in Israel's worship.³² Therefore, translators should make sure that the rendering of this phrase is harmonised throughout the Old Testament.
- The second reason supporting the commands of verses 1-4 is ‘his **loyalty** is forever.’
 - The word for ‘loyalty’ (חֶסֶד) refers to YHWH's faithful commitment to fulfill his covenantal obligations towards his people, even when they themselves are unfaithful.³³
 - This loyalty stretches all the way back through Israel's history (from the example we have in the exodus from Egypt), and stretches forward into “forever.”
 - The expression **forever** refers to something that is everlasting or has no ending.
- The third reason supporting the commands of verses 1-4 is that ‘his **faithfulness** continues through **generation after generation**.’
 - The word faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה) implies a “state in which humans and deities are considered worthy of trust, because they are truthful and committed, with an unwavering disposition, which is reflected in their actions”.³⁴
 - The English word **faithfulness** is very close to, but not exactly the same as, the Hebrew word אֱמוּנָה. See the illustration below for a more detailed look at the Hebrew understanding of the root word (green circle on the right), our modern English understanding of the idea (yellow circle on the left), and what the two understandings have in common (the middle section where the two circles intersect):



- ‘His faithfulness’ has a direct link with the way a person can trust him.

³² For example, Ps. 118:1-4, 29; Jer. 33:11; Nah. 1:7; Ps 34:9; 135:3; 136.

³³ see SDBH.

³⁴ SDBH.

- Verse 5 may be seen as having either two or three poetic lines. The preferred option is the former. For more details, see our [verse by verse notes](#).
- In terms of meaning, the expression **through generation after generation** is similar to ‘forever’ because both refer to an unending reality.
 - A *generation* is a group of people having lived in the same period of time. For example, children, grandchildren and parents belong to three different generations.
 - For languages where it is not possible to have a literal translation of the expression ‘from generation to generation’, translators may simply use the expression they used earlier for ‘forever.’

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