

**THE GOD OF THE PSALMISTS WHO
RECITE ISRAEL'S HISTORY**

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1. INTRODUCTION

God's nature, as presented in the Hebrew Bible, is most clearly discernible by His actions. The HB depicts God as an agent alongside other agents in the text. We need only look to Genesis to find, "In the beginning God. . .," which begins a series of thousands of divine actions in the HB. The Psalter continues this through its depiction of divine activity and contains a cross-section of ancient Israel's theology over a long period of time.

The authors of Genesis-2 Kings and Chronicles frequently present Israel's past in ways which include God's interaction with the nation. While there are notable exceptions, most often individuals are noted for how their lives impact the nation. This is also the situation with Psalms which recite Israel's history.

This study briefly explores divine action in the Psalms as a whole, compares Psalms which recite Israel's history to the rest of the Psalter, examines Ps 78 in light of the rest of the historical Psalms, and then looks at divine treatment of Israelites *vis-a-vis* foreigners in the historical Psalms.

2. RATIONALE

I have been studying various aspects of God's activity for a couple of decades. My dissertation¹ examined this activity in some prophetic literature. In most of that sampling of the prophets, God's activity (which is about one third of all activity) is most often negative and harmful in nature. In contrast, God's actions toward Israel in Joel are positive. Foreigners were treated similarly in the "average" prophet and Joel, and this was significantly harsher than what Israelites received from God.

Recently I have shifted my study to divine activity in the Psalms. The Psalter, as the rest of the HB, has no shortage of divine activity. When considered in its totality the character is quite different from that of the prophets, being much more positive in nature.

Last year I presented an overview of my Psalms content analysis project. This year I am bringing a specific application of it to divine activity in Psalms which recite Israel's history.

I am using the methodology known as content analysis to track divine activity. Content analysis seeks to find trends in a body of literature through a system of categories.² Analysts code the literature according to categories which help answer their questions. A common assumption of content analysis is that *more often is more important*. This project involves classifying phrases where God is the explicit or implied actor in all Psalm texts.

¹*The God of the Prophets: An Analysis of Divine Action* (JSOTSupp 249; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

²Since the purpose is to seek trends, slight adjustments in coding here or there do not make significant differences in the final results.

The present study contemplates God's activity in Psalms which recite specific events in Israel's history. These Psalms do not merely mention an event from their past, but have this recitation as a *chief feature* of the Psalm. Here the Psalmists, being overtly sermonic, highlight events from Israel's past and God's actions in reference to them.³ These so-called historical Psalms are 78; 105; 106; 114; and 136.⁴

- A. Psalm 78 covers from Egypt through the desert until the time of David. It includes descriptions of Israel's unfaithfulness, as well as God's mercy and wrath.⁵
- B. Psalm 105 speaks of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the plagues in Egypt, provision in the wilderness, and the gift of the land of the nations.
- C. Psalm 106 is a confession of the nation's sins, beginning with events found in the book of Numbers, moving from Egypt to the wilderness. It continues with human failures during the days of the judges, and culminates with requests for deliverance from among the nations.
- D. Psalm 114 is a short Psalm which uses figurative language to describe Israel's departure from Egypt and time in the wilderness.⁶
- E. Psalm 136 addresses creation, deliverance from Egypt, victory over Sihon and Og, and the gift of their land to Israel. Each statement is punctuated with, "For His *hesed* is everlasting."

3. EXPLANATORY NOTES

A. Categories of activity are listed in the text with capital letters. These spell out the 4-character codes which are found in the charts (e.g., DELIVERANCE represents DLVR).

B. The so-called historical Psalms are often indicated by HP (historical Psalms), and the rest of the Psalter is NONH (non-historical). When comparing Ps 78 to the rest of HP, the rest of HP is NON78.

C. Some activities have multiple categories. For example, "He heard my supplication" (Ps 6:9) is HEAR + ATTENTION, for it includes both concepts. "Yahweh also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, A stronghold in times of trouble" (Ps 9:9) is coded as SAFETY + DELIVERANCE, for it also contains multiple concepts. When the categories are presented in the following charts, quantities relate to how often a concept occurs, and therefore if one totals the quantities they will add up to over 100%.

³I am not entering into a minimalist-maximalist debate of whether or not the events in these Psalms are indeed historical. Rather, what I mean by "historical" is that the authors claim these events to be historical.

⁴Ps 135 was excluded because only 6 of 21 verses recite Israel's history. I also considered including pleas based on God's former goodness to the nation (44; 80; 83; 129?), but they are of a different order.

⁵It also mentions the destruction of the Tabernacle at Shiloh (cf. Jer 7:1-15; 26).

⁶Brueggemann does not include Ps 114 in *Abiding Astonishment: Psalms, Modernity, and the Making of History* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

D. Many categories tend to be inherently positive or negative; others do not have an explicit connotation, even though they could be clarified by a contextual examination. At the end of each chart is a total of the POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, and NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS activities in the section. These numbers add up to 100% and help bring clarity to the charts.⁷

E. Term “complement” describes the *recipient* of an activity. A complement could be a direct object, indirect object, or in the case of a passive, the subject. Statements have been reduced to ACTOR/ACTION/COMPLEMENT for the sake of coding. Thus “The dog was chased by the boy” would be coded as BOY/CHASE/DOG. Intransitives lack complements.

4. THE ANALYSIS

There are over 2,700⁸ instances of actual or potential divine activity in the Psalms, including 521 requests for activity. Combining “actual” and requested activity shows the theology of the Psalmists, for both types of statements show what the authors thought God could do. Separating them also has a place, for a yearning reflects a different attitude than a confession.⁹ The current study does not separate potential and actual activity since only 4 requests occur in HP.

The historical Psalms, compared to other individual Psalms, have large quantities of divine activity. In terms of the number of divine actions in individual Psalms, 4 of the top 6 are historical ones, and Psalm 78 (a focal point of this study) has the greatest amount of divine activity in the Psalter with the exception of Ps 119.

119: 125 actions

78: 94 actions

89: 85 actions

105: 55 actions

106: 51 actions

136: 48 actions

⁷“Evaluation” is a type of analysis which will be applied to the study at a future date.

⁸2,764 as coded.

⁹One avenue I am pursuing outside of this study is the tracking of imprecatory requests.

ALL PSALMS (2764 ACTS)¹⁰

+DLVR:	384.	*****11
+FAVR:	180.	*****
+HELP:	173.	*****
+ATTN:	128.	*****
-DEST:	113.	*****
+SAFE:	105.	*****
LEGL:	90.	*****
COMS:	84.	*****
+CARE:	80.	*****
+EXAL:	75.	*****
+CREA:	74.	*****
-ANGR:	73.	*****
+HEAR:	73.	*****

POSITIVE 1614 NEGATIVE 557 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 569

Looking at the Psalter as a whole, positive activity outweighs negative by a three to one ratio. DELIVERANCE (DLVR)¹² tops the list, occurring over twice as often as the next activity, FAVOR (FAVR). The top positive categories point toward God's attention and assistance. DESTRUCTION and ANGER are the top negative divine acts, tempering the mainly positive portrayal of God. My hunch is that these acts are mainly directed at the Psalmist's enemies and/or the wicked, which, if true, could be positive from the Psalmist's viewpoint. However, the database has not linked complements and activities for NONH, so complement comparisons between NONH and HP (i.e., what does God do to specific complements) have not been tested.¹³

NON-HISTORICAL PSALMS (2512 ACTS)¹⁴

+DLVR:	366.	*****
+HELP:	168.	*****
+FAVR:	147.	*****
+ATTN:	125.	*****
+SAFE:	101.	*****
-DEST:	91.	*****
LEGL:	82.	*****
+EXAL:	74.	*****
+HEAR:	71.	*****
COMS:	70.	*****
+BLES:	69.	*****
+CREA:	68.	*****

POSITIVE 1490 NEGATIVE 485 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 512

If one removes HP from the rest of the Psalter, the picture does not change much. God's activity in the bulk of Psalms is still extremely positive, and ANGER drops from 12th to 18th place. The 3:1 ratio of positive to negative actions remains, which means

¹⁰This chart only lists the most common activities.

¹¹These charts indicate whether categories tend to be positive or negative. Some, such as MIRACLE (MIRA), might go either way.

¹²An appendix contains the descriptions and definitions of the categories employed in this study.

¹⁴This chart only lists the most common activities.

that the Psalmists see God as doing three times as many positive actions as negative ones.

HISTORICAL PSALMS (252 ACTS)¹⁵

+FAVR:	33.	***** ¹⁶
+MIRA:	26.	*****
-DEST:	22.	*****
-DEAT-C:	20.	***** ¹⁷
+FOOD:	19.	****
+CARE:	18.	****
+DLVR:	18.	****
-ANGR:	17.	****
COMS:	14.	***
RELO-C:	14.	*** ¹⁸
+ALRT:	8.	**
+CHOS:	8.	**
DEED:	8.	**
LEGL:	8.	**

POSITIVE 123 NEGATIVE 72 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 57

There are 252 divine actions in HP covering 65 types of activity. The historical Psalms are quite different from the non-historical ones. The top activities are a mixture of positive and negative ones, and although positive activity outnumbers negative, the ratio is about half of what one sees in NONH. Much of this activity is physical. FAVOR, MIRACLES, DESTRUCTION, CAUSING DEATH, and ANGER are all much more common than in NONH. DELIVERANCE moves from outstripping all other activities to being tied for 6th place. Some otherwise common positive activities (HELP, FAVOR, ATTENTION, and SAFETY) are uncommon among HP.¹⁹ Thus negative activities are much more prominent in HP.

MAIN COMPLEMENTS, HISTORICAL PSALMS (252 ACTIONS)

HUMAN:	143.	*****
INTRANS:	46.	*****
NATURE:	15.	****
ISRAEL:	111.	*****
FOREIGN:	31.	****
NATION:	117.	*****
PSALMIST:	7.	**
ENEMY:	5.	**

¹⁵This chart only lists the most common activities.

¹⁶The top activity, FAVOR, is skewed by the fact that 27 of the 34 times occur in Psalm 136.

¹⁷“-C” appended to a category means “CAUSING X.” DEAT (DEATH) without the -C would mean to die, while DEATH-C means to kill.

¹⁸CAUSING RELOCATION (RELO-C) occurs only 6 times in non-historical Pss.

¹⁹While the database distinguishes between requests for activity and actual activity, and while requests are common in the rest of the Psalms, they are not a common feature of these (4 total, all in Ps 106).

MAIN COMPLEMENTS, NON-HISTORICAL PSALMS (2284 ACTIONS)²⁰

HUMAN: 1722.	*****
INTRANS: 437.	*****
NATURE: 47.	*****
ISRAEL: 1105.	*****
FOREIGN: 91.	*****
NATION: 173.	*****
PSALMIST: 880.	*****
ENEMY: 161.	*****

NONH and HP share some complement emphases. Most of God's actions are toward humans, and Israelites are complements about the same percent of the time (48% NONH 44% HP). About a fifth of these divine actions are intransitive.

There are also some complement differences. First, the ratio of Israelite complements to foreigners is quite different. In NONH, the ratio is 13:1. In HP, the ratio is reduced to 3.5:1. Thus foreigners, while still a minority concern in HP, are nevertheless more important than in the rest of the Psalter. Second, unlike NONH, the Psalmists and their associates are not a major concern in HP (3% compared to 39%). Instead the NATION is emphasized (46% to 7.5%).

DIVINE DEEDS TO ISRAELITES, HISTORICAL PSALMS (110 ACTS)²¹

+DLVR: 15.	****	+ATTN: 3.	*	+COMP-C: 1.	*
+CARE: 12.	***	-DEST: 3.	*	-CONQ: 1.	*
RELO-C: 12.	***	+POSS-C: 3.	*	DISC: 1.	*
-ANGR: 11.	***	-RJCT: 3.	*	+DWEL-C: 1.	*
+FOOD: 11.	***	+APPT: 2.	*	+ESTB: 1.	*
+ALRT: 7.	**	AWAY-C: 2.	*	EXAM: 1.	*
+CMIT: 7.	**	CMND: 2.	*	-FEAR-C: 1.	*
-DEAT-C: 7.	**	DEED: 2.	*	+JOY-C: 1.	*
+COMP: 5.	**	+FAVR: 2.	*	LGHT: 1.	*
COMS: 5.	**	-FIRE: 2.	*	+LIFE: 1.	*
+GUID: 5.	**	+FORG: 2.	*	NEAR-C: 1.	*
+MIRA: 5.	**	-HATE: 2.	*	STRO-C: 1.	*
+CHOS: 4.	*	+HEAR: 2.	*	VIEW: 1.	*
+HELP: 4.	*	-ILLN-C: 2.	*	+WLTH: 1.	*
LEGL: 4.	*	-PUNI: 2.	*	WTHR: 1.	*
+SAFE: 4.	*	+BLES: 1.	*		

POSITIVE 67²² NEGATIVE 29 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 14

²⁰There are 2512 total divine actions in non-historical Psalms, but to date only 2284 have been coded for complements. These data are based on the smaller figure.

²¹Complete list of activity. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding of many actions.

²²FAVOR (FAVR) occurs only twice explicitly toward Israel (see Ps 136), but one might infer from the context that "for His hesed is everlasting" should list Israel as its complement. If so, FAVOR would be the top activity toward Israel, occurring 29 times. In that case the total acts toward Israel would be 137, with 94 positive acts (instead of 67). This would increase the ratio so that it is similar to the rest of the Psalter.

Compared to all divine activity in NONH, the top activities toward Israel include many positive ones. However, more negative ones are also prominent. These Psalmists do speak of God's protection, direction, and provision, but they also commonly speak of God's wrath (i.e., ANGER and CAUSING DEATH, aside from many types of low frequency negative actions).

DIVINE DEEDS TO FOREIGNERS, HISTORICAL PSALMS (31 ACTS)²³

-DEST:	10.	***	-PUNI:	2.	*	-ILLN-C:	1.	*
-DEAT-C:	9.	**	-ANGR:	2.	*	-JUDG:	1.	*
MIRA:	4.	*	COMS:	1.	*	LEGL:	1.	*
-CONQ:	3.	*	COSM:	1.	*	RELO-C:	1.	*
WTHR:	3.	*	DISC:	1.	*	-RJCT:	1.	*
-INSC:	2.	*	-FIRE:	1.	*	-SHAM:	1.	*
-POSS-C:	2.	*	-HATE-C:	1.	*			

POSITIVE 0²⁴ NEGATIVE 28 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 3

For foreigners, divine activity is almost exclusively negative, with only 3 which are non-specific. DESTRUCTION and CAUSING DEATH lead the list. In other words, while God does not always treat Israelites well in HP, the lot for the foreigner is far worse.

PSALM 78 COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE HISTORICAL PSALMS

DIVINE ACTIVITY IN PSALM 78 (94 ACTIONS)²⁵

+CARE:	14.	***	+CHOS:	3.	*	-FEAR-C:	1.	*
-ANGR:	12.	***	-CONQ:	3.	*	-FIRE:	1.	*
-DEAT-C:	10.	***	STRO:	3.	*	+FORG:	1.	*
+FOOD:	10.	***	+ALRT:	2.	*	-HATE:	1.	*
-DEST:	8.	**	CMND:	2.	*	+HEAR:	1.	*
MIRA:	8.	**	CULT:	2.	*	-ILLN-C:	1.	*
WTHR:	8.	*	+HELP:	2.	*	-JUDG:	1.	*
+COMP:	5.	**	-INSC:	2.	*	+LIFE:	1.	*
DEED:	4.	*	+SAFE:	2.	*	+POSS-C:	1.	*
+DLVR:	4.	*	+APPT:	1.	*	-PUNI:	1.	*
+GUID:	4.	*	+BUIL:	1.	*	ROYL:	1.	*
LEGL:	4.	*	CREA:	1.	*	-SHAM:	1.	*
RELO-C:	4.	*	+DWEL-C:	1.	*	-SORR-C:	1.	*
-RJCT:	4.	*	FAML:	1.	*	+FAVR:	1.	*

POSITIVE 36 NEGATIVE 39 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 19

Psalm 78 is the largest Psalm in HP (37% of all HP activity). While all of the historical Psalms aside from Ps 114 have a wide variety of types of divine activity, Ps 78 is the broadest (42 categories).²⁶ Here there is a balance between positive and negative

²³Complete list of activity. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding of many actions.

²⁴CAUSING POSSESSION is actually a negative action, for God caused the territory of the foreigners to be given to Israel (78:55; 136:21-22).

²⁵Complete list of activity. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding of many actions.

²⁶Psalm 105: 33 types of divine activity; Ps 106: 33 types; Ps 114: 5 types; Ps 136: 19 types.

divine activity. Three of the top 7 categories are overtly negative, which is in sharp contrast to NONH, but only somewhat different from NON78. Compared to most Psalms, neither DELIVERANCE nor FAVOR are main concerns.

While any activity can have multiple tags applied, ANGER, CAUSING DEATH, and DESTRUCTION have no overlap with each other in Ps 78. This means that these account for about a third of all divine activity in the Psalm. On the other hand, FOOD and CARE completely overlap. Overall, taking into account overlapping categories, 39 divine actions in Ps 78 are overtly negative, and only 36 are overtly positive.

DELIVERANCE, the most common NONH activity, is by contrast not a main theme. Rather, God's ANGER is over twice as common as God's COMPASSION.

NON78: DIVINE ACTIVITY IN THE REST OF THE HISTORICAL PSALMS (158 ACTS)²⁷

+FAVR:	32.	*****	+HELP:	3.	*	+COMP-C:	1.	*
MIRA:	18.	****	-JUDG:	3.	*	CULT:	1.	*
COMS:	14.	***	LOCA:	3.	*	DISC:	1.	*
-DEST:	14.	***	+POSS-C:	3.	*	+ESTB:	1.	*
+DLVR:	14.	***	WTHR:	3.	*	+EXAL:	1.	*
-DEAT-C:	10.	***	-AWAY-C:	2.	*	EXAM:	1.	*
RELO-C:	10.	***	CMND:	2.	*	+FORG:	1.	*
+FOOD:	9.	**	-CONQ:	2.	*	+GUID:	1.	*
+CMIT:	7.	**	COSM:	2.	*	-HATE:	1.	*
+ALRT:	6.	**	+ETHG:	2.	*	-HATE-C:	1.	*
-ANGR:	5.	**	-ILLN-C:	2.	*	+HEAR:	1.	*
+CHOS:	5.	**	-INSC:	2.	*	+JOY-C:	1.	*
CREA:	5.	**	+SAFE:	2.	*	+LGHT:	1.	*
-PUNI:	5.	**	STRO:	2.	*	+NEAR-C:	1.	*
+CARE:	4.	*	+STRO-C:	2.	*	ROYL:	1.	*
DEED:	4.	*	+ADVI:	1.	*	SHOW:	1.	*
LEGL:	4.	*	+APPT:	1.	*	VIEW:	1.	*
+ATTN:	3.	*	+BLES:	1.	*	+WLTH:	1.	*
-FIRE:	3.	*	+COMP:	1.	*			

POSITIVE 87 NEGATIVE 33 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 38

There are some negative divine actions in NON78, but positive activity is more dominant, especially than in Ps 78. (Of course, God's FAVOR is somewhat skewed by Ps 136's emphasis on God's *hesed*.) DELIVERANCE also moves up in importance compared to Ps 78.

²⁷Complete list of activity. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding of many actions.

COMPLEMENTS, PSALM 78 (94 ACTS)²⁸

HUMAN:	64.	*****	NATION:	55.	*****
NATURE:	8.	**			
INTRANS:	7.	**	ISRAEL:	47.	*****
ANMD:	1.	*	FOREIGN:	16.	****
COSM:	1.	*			
EARTH:	1.	*	ENEMY:	3.	*
INDS:	1.	*	ROYL:	3.	*
NONH:	1.	*	AGRI:	1.	*
UNCL:	1.	*	CULT:	1.	*
ZION:	1.	*	FAML:	1.	*

Psalm 78 is explicitly focused on God's dealings with the NATION (91% of human complements), and the PSALMIST and his/her associates is not a complement. While ISRAELITES are emphasized over FOREIGNERS by a 3:1 ratio, Ps 78 has more FOREIGNERS as complements than any other Psalm (16), followed by Ps 105 (10) and Ps 2 (9).

COMPLEMENTS, THE REST OF THE HISTORICAL PSALMS (NON78) (158 ACTS)²⁹

HUMAN:	79.	*****	NATION:	62.	*****
INTRANS:	39.	*****	PSALMIST:	7.	**
NATURE:	7.	**	ISRAEL:	64.	*****
COSM:	4.	*	FOREIGN:	15.	****
ANMW:	1.	*			
EARTH:	1.	*			
UNCL:	1.	*			
INDS:	2.	*			
LEAD:	6.	**			
ROYL:	4.	*			
ENEMY:	2.	*			
FAML:	2.	*			
AGRI:	1.	*			
MILI:	1.	*			

As with Ps 78, the emphasis is on Israelites, in this case by a 4:1 ratio. There are many more intransitives in NON78 than in Ps 78 (both in terms of quantity and ratio).³⁰ About a tenth of all activity is toward foreigners, which, while less than Ps 78, is still over twice as high (relatively speaking) as NONH.

²⁸Complete list of complements. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding (e.g., HUMN+ISRL).

²⁹Complete list of complements.

³⁰27 of these are from Ps 136, "For his *hesed* is everlasting."

ISRAELITES AS COMPLEMENTS IN PSALM 78 (78 ACTS)³¹

+CARE:	14.	***	RELO-C:	3.	*	+DWEL-C:	1.	*
-ANGR:	10.	***	-RJCT:	3.	*	FAML:	1.	*
+FOOD:	10.	***	STRO:	3.	*	+FAVR:	1.	*
-DEAT-C:	7.	**	+ALRT:	2.	*	-FEAR-C:	1.	*
+MIRA:	6.	**	CMND:	2.	*	-FIRE:	1.	*
+COMP:	5.	**	CULT:	2.	*	+FORG:	1.	*
DEED:	4.	*	+HELP:	2.	*	-HATE:	1.	*
-DEST:	4.	*	+SAFE:	2.	*	+HEAR:	1.	*
+DLVR:	4.	*	WTHR:	2.	*	-JUDG:	1.	*
+GUID:	4.	*	+APPT:	1.	*	+LIFE:	1.	*
LEGL:	4.	*	+BUIL:	1.	*	-PUNI:	1.	*
WTHR:	4.	*	-CONQ:	1.	*	ROYL:	1.	*
+CHOS:	3.	*	CREA:	1.	*	-SORR-C:	1.	*

POSITIVE 35 NEGATIVE 26 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 17

God's activity in Ps 78 toward Israel is fairly balanced between the positive and the negative. The positive acts show God's intervention in the natural order to assist Israel. The negative acts demonstrate God's ANGER and wrath against Israel.

FOREIGNERS AS COMPLEMENTS IN PSALM 78 (16 ACTS)³²

-DEST:	4.	*	WTHR:	2.	*
-DEAT-C:	3.	*	-ILLN-C:	1.	*
-ANGR:	2.	*	RELO-C:	1.	*
-CONQ:	2.	*	-RJCT:	1.	*
-INSC:	2.	*	-SHAM:	1.	*
MIRA:	2.	*			

POSITIVE 0 NEGATIVE 14 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 2

God's activity toward foreigners in Ps 78 is almost universally negative. These harmful acts are carried out in a variety of ways.

³¹Complete list of activity. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding of many actions.

³²Complete list of activity. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding of many actions.

ISRAELITES AS COMPLEMENTS IN THE REST OF THE HISTORICAL PSALMS (63 ACTS)³³

+DLVR:	13.	***	+FAVR:	2.	*	-FIRE:	1.	*
RELO-C:	8.	**	-ILLN-C:	2.	*	+FORG:	1.	*
+CMIT:	7.	**	-PUNI:	2.	*	+GUID:	1.	*
+ALRT:	6.	**	+SAFE:	2.	*	-HATE:	1.	*
-ANGR:	5.	**	+APPT:	1.	*	+HEAR:	1.	*
COMS:	5.	**	+BLES:	1.	*	+JOY-C:	1.	*
+FOOD:	4.	*	+CHOS:	1.	*	LEGL:	1.	*
MIRA:	4.	*	CMND:	1.	*	+LGHT:	1.	*
+ATTN:	3.	*	+COMP:	1.	*	+NEAR-C:	1.	*
+CARE:	3.	*	+COMP-C:	1.	*	+STRO-C:	1.	*
+HELP:	3.	*	-CONQ:	1.	*	VIEW:	1.	*
+POSS-C:	3.	*	DEED:	1.	*	+WLTH:	1.	*
-AWAY-C:	2.	*	DISC:	1.	*	WTHR:	1.	*
-DEAT-C:	2.	*	+ESTB:	1.	*			
-DEST:	2.	*	EXAM:	1.	*			

POSITIVE 42 NEGATIVE 13 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 8

NON78 is not nearly as harsh toward Israelites as Ps 78. Positive activity outweighs the negative by 3 to 1. DELIVERANCE, uncommon in Ps 78, takes center stage. The Exodus theme continues with God's COMMITMENT, provision, direction, attentiveness, and CAUSING RELOCATION (i.e., mainly from Egypt and into the land). ANGER occurs, but relatively speaking is much less frequent.

FOREIGNERS AS COMPLEMENTS IN THE REST OF THE HISTORICAL PSALMS (15 ACTS)³⁴

-DEAT-C:	6.	**	DISC:	1.	*
-DEST:	6.	**	-FIRE:	1.	*
MIRA:	2.	*	-HATE-C:	1.	*
-PUNI:	2.	*	-JUDG:	1.	*
COMS:	1.	*	LEGL:	1.	*
-CONQ:	1.	*	-POSS-C:	1.	*
COSM:	1.	*	WTHR:	1.	*

POSITIVE 0³⁵ NEGATIVE 14 NEUTRAL/AMBIGUOUS 1

NON78 takes the same position toward foreigners as Ps 78. Their treatment by God is physical and harsh.

³³Complete list of activity. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding of many actions.

³⁴Complete list of activity. Numbers may appear to add up to more than total activities because of multiple coding of many actions.

³⁵See note above under "Divine Deeds to Foreigners, Historical Psalms."

SUMMARY: POSITIVE & NEGATIVE DIVINE ACTIVITY IN THE PSALMS

	POSITIVE	NEG	NEUTRAL/AMBIG
ALL PSALMS	1614	557	569
NON-HISTORICAL PSALMS	1490	485	512
NON-HISTORICAL ACTS	1166	343	463
NON-HISTORICAL REQUESTS	322	142 ³⁶	49
HISTORICAL PSALMS	123	72	57
HISTORICAL-ISRAELITES	67	29	14
HISTORICAL-FOREIGNERS	0	28	3
PSALM78	36	39	19
NON78 HISTORICAL	87	33	38
PS78 ISRAELITES	35	26	17
PS78 FOREIGNERS	0	14	2
NON78 ISRAELITES	42	13	8
NON78 FOREIGNERS	0	14	1

The above chart provides a summary of positive and negative divine activity in the Psalms. The 3 to 1 positive to negative ratio exists in the non-historical Psalms and is just slightly lower in NON78. Psalm 78 stands out with its balance between positive and negative divine activity.

5. CONCLUSIONS

God is a significant actor in the Psalms which recite Israel's history. YHWH is depicted as a causal agent in this world, directly affecting humanity and the world around people. These acts are not mainly generic "mighty deeds," but they are given with specifics.

The tone of these works is prophetic. It is prophetic in that the author takes God's perspective on Israel's history, similarly to what one finds in Judges or Kings.

Unlike the rest of the Psalms, where the recipients of divine activity are most often the Psalmist and his/her associates or other smaller groups, the historical Psalms emphasize God's dealings with the nation.

In comparison to most of the book of Psalms, divine activity in the historical Psalms is decidedly less positive than that of the non-historical ones. Thus when considering the specifics of Israel's past, the "historians" are less idealistic and more balanced in their approach.

Psalm 78, viewed alone, presents an even darker picture. In this Psalm, which contains many specifics, harmful divine activity outweighs the helpful. Israelites are on the receiving end of a little more positive activity than negative, while foreigners receive nothing but harsh treatment. It is clearly the harshest of the historical Psalms.

³⁶117 of these are negative requests against the Psalmist's enemies.

The other historical Psalms present a much more positive view of God's dealings with Israel, although the negative is not altogether missing. However, these Psalms are similarly negative toward foreigners, with harsh physical consequences being their lot.

In conclusion, these Psalmists wanted to make certain that Israel understood that their life was intricately bound up with God. Rather than these Psalms being request oriented, the readers or hearers were to reflect on the lives of their ancestors, and by extension, their lives. Their *shalom* or its lack was dependent upon God's direct intervention, not fate or chance.