

The Unity of the Egyptian Hallel: Psalms 113-18

ELIZABETH HAYES
FULLER SEMINARY EXTENSION
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Discourse analysis provides the paradigmatic techniques that demonstrate the unity of the Egyptian Hallel at the textual level. A stretch of text is recognized as a discourse when it contains elements of cohesion, coherence, and prominence. Cohesion is determined by semantic factors. Coherence is determined by meaningful thematic flow, including evidence of thematic peaking, or prominence. The presence of these three factors supports the unitary nature of the Egyptian Hallel text.

Key words: Egyptian Hallel, discourse analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

The "Egyptian Hallel" (Psalms 113-18) has been a significant component of Jewish festival liturgy since the Tannaitic period,¹ and it continues to hold a place of honor in contemporary Passover celebrations.² The historical use of the Egyptian Hallel group raises the question of its placement in the canon. The text of the series of psalms appears in the same order both in the Masoretic Text and in the Septuagint. This allows for the possibility of intentional ordering by the

1. Ismar Elbogen traces the liturgical use of the Egyptian Hallel on Passover to a time before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. He notes that the recitation of the Hallel was common to all the pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). The order of Book V of the Psalms is significant. The Egyptian Hallel is followed immediately by Psalm 119. Psalm 119, the great Torah Psalm, is reflective of the Feast of Pentecost, where remembrance of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai is a key feature. Following Psalm 119 are the Songs of Ascent, which are recited at the Feast of Tabernacles. This ordering may imply a liturgical remembrance intent on the part of the editor of Book V. See Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 5753/1993) 114ff.

2. For a comprehensive summary of contemporary customs, see Carmine Di Sante, *Jewish Prayer: The Origins of Christian Liturgy* (New York: Paulist, 1985) 189ff.

editor.³ Were these psalms arranged sequentially for the sake of convenience, or did the editor intend to tell a larger story by deliberately creating the grouping? Discourse analysis⁴ and text-linguistics provide the paradigmatic techniques for a multidimensional approach to the text of the Egyptian Hallel. This approach will demonstrate the unity of the group at the textual level.

Although the term *discourse* is often associated with narrative passages, there is a tendency on the part of modern linguists to broaden the definition. *Discourse*, according to Cotterell and Turner, comprises "any coherent stretch of language" structured to exhibit "some measure of development."⁵ Or, in other words, a discourse exhibits elements of cohesion, coherence, and prominence.

For this reason, the first step involved in discourse analysis of the Egyptian Hallel is that of inspecting the text of Psalms 113-18 for elements of cohesion in order to establish the discourse boundaries of the macrostructure.⁶ The second step is that of microexamining the macrostructure to compile various sets of information, such as thematic nets and deixis⁷ in the social, temporal, and locative spheres. This microexamination includes form analysis in the areas of morphology, syntax, semantics, style, and poetic techniques, all of which point toward the coherence of the macrostructure. The third and last step entails a search of the macrostructure for the contours of thematic flow. By utilizing the synthesized material from the first two steps, the contours of thematic flow are observed for the prominence associated with thematic peak.⁸ Taken together, the elements of cohesion, coherence, and prominence mark the text as a single discourse unit that may be read as a whole.

3. Although there are significant variations in titles and numbering, the text itself is arranged in the same order.

4. According to Cotterell and Turner, determining coherence is a key factor in identifying a discourse unit. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1989) 230. For further information, see the more nuanced description of Longacre's discourse genres in Walter Bodine (ed.), *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 11.

5. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 230.

6. David Black explains that a macrostructure exhibits cohesion, coherence, and prominence. The cohesion of a discourse is determined by semantic factors, while coherence is determined by the actual meaning content of the material. Prominence is determined by the narrative flow of the material and is marked by various linguistic and stylistic features. Fuller Seminary Extension lecture, Summer, 1995.

7. This term is used by Cotterell and Turner to describe the interrelatedness of subjects, objects, and localities within a discourse (*Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 236).

8. A comprehensive report of these factors is beyond the scope of this paper, so the discussion focuses upon the highlights of each category as they relate to the discourse as a whole.

II. THE CANON, THE PSALTER, AND THE EGYPTIAN HALLEL AS A MACROSTRUCTURE

The division of the Psalter into five books is a well-accepted tradition, and many consider the psalms in Book V to be the latest material collected.⁹ Book V contains several unique features, including the shortest psalm in the Psalter (117), the longest psalm in the Psalter (119), and the unitary Songs of Ascent collection (120-34).¹⁰ These factors raise the question of editorial intent: did the editor arrange the material with a larger purpose in mind? While the issue of canonical criticism is beyond the scope of this paper,¹¹ a basic assumption of this approach provides a significant parameter for the process, in that the text to be examined is the final form of the text as recorded in BHS.¹²

When the material in Book V (Psalms 107-50) is examined at the textual level, two key factors emerge as discourse markers that effectively delimit Psalms 113-18 as a discrete unit. The first key factor is the term **חֶסֶד**, which is present in the repeated refrain line **יְהוָה לִי יְהוָה** **חֶסֶד**, found in the first line of Psalm 107 and the first and last lines of Psalm 118. This repetition provides an *inclusio* for the larger unit of Psalms 107-18. The single term **חֶסֶד** also adds an element of internal cohesion to the larger group. This term appears in the last line of Psalm 107 and in Ps 108:21, 26. The same term appears in Psalm 107, where it functions as a poetic feature in the fourfold repetition of the line **יְהוָה לִי יְהוָה חֶסֶד** (107:8, 15, 21, 31).¹³ Clearly the theme of God's faithfulness is central to the larger grouping (107-18).¹⁴ The second factor to act as a discourse marker is the acrostic composition

9. Gerald Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Int* 66 (1992) 129, 132ff.

10. A thorough discussion of the textual unity of the Songs of Ascent is found in Hendrick Viviers, "The Coherence of the Maalot Psalms," *ZAW* 106 (1994) 275-89.

11. The complexity of canonical criticism lies in the multilayered stages of canonical development. These stages are characterized by the relationship of the text to the life situations of multiple believing communities (synchronic development) and consequent reinterpretations (diachronic development). Robert Carroll states, "it was the final product of their work which was canonized rather than the primary or original traditions, so the central issue for the theologian must be the canonical form of the work." Robert P. Carroll, "Canonical Criticism: A Recent Trend in Biblical Scholarship?" *ExpTim* 92 (1980) 73.

12. See n. 10. This results in bracketing the issues of individual authorship and dating, temporarily setting them aside to focus upon the text itself.

13. The use of the term **חֶסֶד** within the Psalm 113-18 grouping will be taken up later in this paper.

14. Watson notes the use of a key word such as **חֶסֶד** may function as a discourse marker for a principal theme. Wilfred Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984) 288. Interestingly, the discourse contours of the Egyptian Hallel are anticipated by the presence of subthemes marked by a series of significant key words that occur in Psalms 107-12. According to Cotterell and Turner,

TABLE 1. *Terms Used for God in the Egyptian Hallel*

Term	113	114	115	116	117	118
יהוה	6		10	15	2	21
יְהוָה	2		3	1	1	6
אלהים	1		2	1		
שֵׁם		3	1	3		4
אֲדוֹן		1				
אלוה		1				אל 1
Frequency	12/9 vv. 85/33 vv.	2/8 vv.	16/18 vv.	20/19 vv.	3/2 vv.	32/29 vv.

present in Psalms 111-12 and in the monolithic Psalm 119. This poetic device serves as a stylistic envelope around Psalms 113-18, effectively setting the outer poles of the discourse unit, or macrostructure.¹⁵

It is necessary, however, to establish internal cohesion of this unit before the group may be termed a macrostructure for the purposes of discourse analysis. Several lexical features mark the internal cohesion of Psalms 113-18, the most significant being an extremely high repetition rate of explicit terms for God. As table 1 demonstrates, יהוה and several synonymous terms for God occur approximately once per verse.¹⁶ For purposes of comparison, Psalms 111-12 use these terms in approximately one out of two verses, and Psalm 119 uses them in approximately one out of seven verses.

The cohesion resulting from the frequent use of explicit terms for God in the Egyptian Hallel clearly indicates that יהוה is the hero of

the stages of a coherent discourse (be it prose, poetry, or other medium) include: title, stage setting, prepeak events, discourse peak, postpeak events and closure (Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 247-48). In this case the repeated term שֵׁם occurs in 109:21 and 111:96, anticipating the Egyptian Hallel discourse title in 113:1-3. The terms כבוד, רום appear together in 108:6, anticipating the stage-setting use of the terms at 113:4. The word pair אמת, חסד occurs in 108:5 and together with the term כבוד initiates the series of prepeak episodes in 115:1ff. In addition, the word pair אמת, חסד is the focal point of the discourse peak at 117:1-2. The term חסד occurs in 111:5b and 112:6b and is a dominant key word in the Egyptian Hallel in 115:12. The term חסד is used in a refrain line at 118:1 that initiates the postpeak episodes and is found together with the term רום as a marker of discourse closure. This also confirms the cohesion of the subsection noted at Psalms 107-18.

15. Wilson considers 118 to be the first psalm in a new grouping. While his divisions make logical sense at the textual level, he neglects the historical usage of the group as festival liturgy. Considering Elbogen's dating, this is a piece of circumstantial evidence that is too compelling to ignore. Holladay's assessment of 118 as a bridge psalm fits with either view. William Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook for a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 79.

16. For purposes of comparison, Psalms 111-12 use these terms in approximately one out of two verses, and Psalm 119 uses them in approximately one out of seven verses.

the story, but this fact alone does not "tell the story." Thus, establishing the parameters of the narrative sequence requires an examination of the deictic terms that, according to Cotterell and Turner, "indicate personal, temporal, or locational aspects of an event."¹⁷ There is much to be gained by such an examination, for these are the aspects of the text that comprise the key thematic contours of the discourse. In turn, the thematic contours of the discourse determine the coherence of the macrostructure.

III. DEIXIS AND THE EGYPTIAN HALLEL

The Egyptian Hallel exhibits significant deictic features in the temporal, locative, and social spheres. The temporal aspects of the discourse are marked by the repeated phrase *מעתה ועד-עולם*, "both now and forever," which occurs as a call to praise in 113:2 and as a vow to praise in 115:18.¹⁸ Additional markers include the phrase *זוההיום*, "this is the day," which occurs as an exclamation of praise in 118:24,¹⁹ and the phrase *כי לעולם חסדו* "for his mercy endures forever," which functions as a repeated refrain line in 118:1b, 2b, 3b, and 29b. Consequently, the temporal contour moves from God's eternal praiseworthiness (113:2) to a general vow to praise (115:18) to a renewed emphasis upon God's eternal praiseworthiness (118:1bff.) and then to a specific exclamation of praise with emphasis upon the present moment (118:24). Thus, the features of temporal deixis combine to form a thematic net that indicates that *יהוה* is a praiseworthy God, and he is to be praised both now and forever.

The locative aspects of the discourse are marked for *יהוה*, the hero of the story, for his people, and for other characters. One strand of the contour is marked by the term *רום*, which first appears in 113:4 as a *Qal* participle, describing God as high above the nations. The term reappears in 113:7 as a *Hiphil* imperfect, describing God's action in raising the needy, and in 118:28 as a *Polel* cohortative, describing the psalmist's intention to extol God. Thus, the locative contour moves from God as present in heaven, reaching down to rescue his people, to earth where God's people respond by returning praises to him in heaven. A second locative strand is noted in 115:17, in which the dead do not praise God, nor do *בלי-ירדו דומה*, "those who go down to silence," thus establishing a third, unnamed location to describe the distress of separation and death. The poet elaborates upon this theme

17. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 236.

18. "From now and for ever" (BDB, 763a 2m). This is a slightly slippery phrase, theologically speaking: for the present, however, the issue is still correlation of terms at the semantic level.

19. The demonstrative pronoun in this phrase emphasizes rejoicing in the current moment.

TABLE 2. Coherence in the Egyptian Hallel:
Themes Based upon Temporal, Locative, and Social Deixis

Deixis	Discourse Title 113:1-3 <i>'now and forever'</i> 113:2	Stage-Setting 113:4-114:8	Prepeak Episodes 115:1-116:19	DISCOURSE PEAK 17:1-2 <i>כַּעֲתָה וְעַד-עוֹלָם</i> 'now and forever' 115:18	Postpeak Episodes 118:1-27 <i>כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסָדוֹ</i> 'His mercy endures forever' 118:1b, 2b, 3b, 29b <i>זֶה-הַיּוֹם</i> 'this is the day' 118:24	Discourse Closure 118:28-29
Temporal						
Locative		<i>רוֹם</i> 113:4—God is exalted over the nations 113:4—God raises the poor and needy from the dust	<i>כָּל-יְהוּדֵי דוֹמָה</i> 115:17—the dead do not praise God			<i>רוֹם</i> 118:28—the Psalmist vows to exalt God
Social		<i>דָּל אֶבְיֹן</i> 'poor and needy' 113:7-9 <i>יִהְיֶה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל</i> 'Israel and Judah' 114:1-2	<i>הַגּוֹיִם</i> 'the nations' 115:1 <i>אֱלֹהֵינוּ צַבָּתוֹתָם</i> 'their idols, our God' 115:3-4	1 <i>הַלְלוּ אֶת-יְהוָה</i> <i>כָּל-גּוֹיִם שְׂבַחְתֶּם</i> <i>כָּל-הָאֱמוּנֹת</i> 2 <i>כִּי גָבַר עָלֵינוּ</i> <i>חֲסָדוֹ וְנִאֲמַת-יְהוָה</i> <i>לְעוֹלָם הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה</i> 117:1-2		

in 116:3, 6, and 118:5 and gives further attention to the theme of God's actions in reaching down to rescue his people.²⁰ Thus, the features of locative deixis combine to form a thematic net that indicates that יהוה is active as the deliverer of his people and that this activity takes place in both the heavenly and earthly spheres.

The social aspects of the discourse are marked by the relationships between various characters. יהוה is the hero, and a fascinating array of personalities surround him. In 113:7-9 there are the non-specific דל and אֲבֵיִן, the "poor" and "needy," whom God saves and settles. In 114:1-2 אֱלֹהֵי הַגִּוִּים and אֱלֹהֵי הַגִּוִּים, "the nations," enter the picture, while in 115:3-4, עֲצַבֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, "the idols of the nations," and אֱלֹהֵינוּ, "OUR GOD," are compared. All mention of the idols ceases after 115:8. The focus is upon Israel, Aaron, and those who fear God, all of whom are exhorted to trust in יהוה, who is further described as their עֲזָרָה וְשִׁמְשֹׁן, "their help and their shield."²¹ From this point, the praiseworthiness of יהוה is accentuated and amplified for the remainder of the text. The social aspects emphasize that God is supremely able to respond to the earthly needs of his people. The specific identity of these people involves Israel and Judah, those who were brought out of Egypt to become God's possession and his people. Surely this God is worthy of worship on all counts, yet in Ps 115:5-7 the psalmist utilizes a most evocative series of negative statements to discourage idol worship and focus the eyes of God's people firmly upon his salvation.²² Thus, the features of social deixis form a thematic net that indicates that יהוה alone is to be praised by all who fear him.

The contours of the temporal, locative, and social thematic nets reveal movement from the heights of the heavenly sphere to the specifics of the earthly sphere to the interaction between the two and back to the heavenly sphere. יהוה is eternally praiseworthy, he delivers his people by reaching from the heavens to the earth, and he welcomes praise from all who fear him. These subthemes combine to establish the main theme of יהוה-Praiseworthy Deliverer. Thus, as the thematic nets intertwine and are embellished by the poet, a coherent macrostructure emerges. Cohesion . . . coherence . . . all that remains is the discovery of thematic peak and the prominence that it reveals.

20. The poetic style of these two verses is noteworthy and will be discussed in the next section.

21. Dahood translates this phrase "Helper and Suzerain" rather than "Helper and Shield," by repointing the MT (M. Dahood, *Psalms I-III* [3 vols.; AB 16-17A; New York: Doubleday, 1965-70] 3.141). The use of the more specific term suzerain implies a very specific social relationship between God and his people, a nuance that affects the interpretation of the text. Psalm 115 also marks the point in the thematic contour where other terms are used in a more specific manner as well.

22. This is a poetic highlight of the group and will be discussed in the next section.

IV. DISCOURSE STRUCTURE AND POETICS IN THE EGYPTIAN HALLEL

Structural Analysis

The linear text of the Egyptian Hallel group is embellished by numerous poetic elements that are used to "tell the story" as a whole. The poetic techniques are employed as the theme of הַלְלֵהוּ —Praiseworthy Deliverer unfolds throughout the discourse and include word pairs, terrace and gender parallelism, repetition, chiasmus, lists, and rhetorical questions. The poetic analysis of the group will highlight certain techniques and features that mark the discourse stages mentioned by Cotterell and Turner,²³ in the following thematic progression:

113:1-3: **DISCOURSE TITLE**—*formula that introduces genre*, here a threefold call to praise.

113:4-114:8: **STAGE SETTING**—*identification of the problem*, in this case God is seen at work improving various situations of his people, particularly the poor, the barren, and the captives in Egypt.

115:1-116:19: **PREPEAK EPISODES**—God is glorified due to his covenant love and faithfulness, expressed in the aforementioned acts of the living God, whose astounding abilities stand in stark contrast to the impotence of the idols. God is able to deliver the psalmist from death itself.

117:1-2: **DISCOURSE PEAK**—*the high point*—God is to be glorified by all nations and all people due to his love and faithfulness.

118:1-27: **POSTPEAK EPISODES**—God is to be thanked by Israel, Aaron, and all who fear him, due to his goodness and the eternal nature of his covenant love.

118:28-29: **DISCOURSE CLOSURE**—The poet vows to praise and exalt his God due to his goodness and the eternal nature of his covenant love.

Poetic Analysis

The discourse title, *Psalms 113:1-3*, features the threefold repetition of הַלְלֵהוּ יְהוָה in the hymnic call to praise. This identifies the object of praise and serves the rhetorical function of gaining the attention of the audience.

23. According to Cotterell and Turner, the stages of a coherent discourse (be it prose, poetry, or other medium) include: title, stage setting, prepeak events, discourse peak, postpeak events and closure (Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 247–48).

Stage-setting for the narrative takes place in **Psalms 113:4-114:8**. Rhetorical questions are used throughout the discourse to set forth key propositions. The first of five is found in 113:5. In this case, the psalmist expects a negative answer when he asks, "Who is like the Lord our God who is seated on high?"

Of course no one is like יהוה! The poet continues to set the stage by recounting the saving works of יהוה in history.²⁴ In the four quatrain stanzas of Ps 114:1-8, the poet brings to mind the exodus from Egypt, when the people were initiated as the people and nation of יהוה and the conquest, when the newly formed nation "came home" to the Land. The psalm overflows with poetic features, including the use of irony in the second rhetorical question in 114:5, "Why is it, O sea, that you flee?" and in the repeated use of word pairs to establish parallelism. The parallelism found in vv. 4 and 6 includes the masculine terms איל, הר, and the feminine terms צון, גבעה. This results in a gender-matched parallelism within the refrain lines.

Prepeak episodes begin with a scene change at 115:1. In an address to God, the speaker defers all glory לשמך, "to your name," and the request is an appeal to his חסד and אמת, which serves to introduce these key terms to the discourse. This is followed by the third rhetorical question, "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'" Where, indeed! He is in heaven and he acts on his own volition, quite unlike the gods of the nations. The section marked by vv. 4-8 comprises a list of the anthropomorphic failings of the idols. These lines repeat the ל, particle found in v. 1 and place the verbs at the end of the line, producing a rhetorical effect much like a mournful drum beat. The term זכר appears in v. 12 as a dominant key word. Unlike the idols who are created by men, יהוה remembers his people.

Psalm 116 continues the series of prepeak events, bringing the action of the narration into sharper focus by the use of a first-person example, that of יהוה and his saving activity. The distress of the speaker is vividly described by a semantic-sonant chiasm in v. 3ab.²⁵ Watson describes such a chiasm as containing one leg that is comprised of a semantic word pair (similar meaning), while the other is comprised of a sonant word pair (similar sounds).

24. Regarding the Egyptian Hallel, Avroham Fever states, "The Talmud (Pesachim 118a) explains . . . its themes are essentially the articles of the Jewish faith. They include the exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the sea, the revelation at Mt. Sinai, the resurrection of the dead, and the cataclysmic advent of the Messiah" (*Tehillim* [New York: Mesorah, 1982] 4.1363).

25. Watson describes such a chiasm as containing one leg that is comprised of a semantic word pair (similar meaning), while the other is comprised of a sonant word pair (similar sounds). Wilfred Watson, "Further Examples of Semantic-Sonant Chiasmus," *CBQ* 46 (1984) 31. A second example is found in 118:5, in a similar call for help.

TABLE 3. Prominence in the Egyptian Hallel: Analysis of Poetic Features

Feature	Discourse Title 113:1-3	Stage-Setting 113:4-114:8	Prepeak Episodes 115:1-116:19	DISCOURSE PEAK 117:1-2	Postpeak Episodes 118:1-27	Discourse Closure 118:28-29
Repetition	threefold repetition: שָׁם יִדְרָה		threefold repetition: כָּטַח בִּידְרָה 115:9ff.		fourfold repetition: כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ 118:1-4	concluding envelope refrain line: הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ
Rhetorical Questions		"Who is like the Lord our God who is seated on high?" 113:5 "Why is it, O sea, that you flee?" 114:5	"Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'" 115:2 "What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?" 116:12		"What can man do to me?" 118:6	
List			Anthropological failings of the idols 115:4-8			
Chiasmus			semantic-sonant chiasm: misery 116:3ab		semantic-sonant chiasm: misery 118:5	
Word Pairs			אֱמוּנָה / חֲסִד 115:1 זָכַר, dominant key word 115:12	אֱמוּנָה / חֲסִד 117:1-2		
Parallelism		synonymous, 113:4, 7 terrace, 113:8 gender-matched 114:4, 6	terrace, 115:12			

חִבְלֵי־יָמוֹת	אֶפְפוֹנֵי
מִצְאוֹנֵי	וּמִצְרֵי־שְׂאוֹל

The speaker had called to the Lord, and the Lord has answered by delivering the speaker from his straits. The speaker asks the fourth rhetorical question, "What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?" The response to this question brings the rhetorical situation to the specific location of the Jerusalem Temple, where vows are paid and various offerings are made to יהוה. This tight focus leads to the discourse peak in Psalm 117.

Psalm 117:1-2 contains the discourse peak, which is marked by a short yet universal call to praise. The call is to כָּל־הָאֲמִיִּם and כָּל־גּוֹיִם, synonymous terms that are not specific to Israel. The second line contains the word pair חסד and אמת in an emphasized state as elements of two separate cola.²⁶ Thus, the focus returns to יהוה, representing him as the only God worthy of praise by all people. This is the high point of the story, the goal of the discourse, the memorable thought. All that follows points to themes already present and serves as post-peak information and closure.

Postpeak episodes occur in 118:1-17. The psalmist uses fourfold repetition in the hymnic call to praise (vv. 1-4), followed by a second semantic-sonant chiasmus, again describing misery and rescue.

קָרָתִי יְהוָה	מִן־הַמִּצָּר
בַּמָּרְקָב	עָנָנִי

After this statement the speaker affirms his confidence in יהוה by asking the fifth rhetorical question, "What can mortals do to me?" (v. 6b).

Psalm 118:28-29 concludes the discourse with a vow to praise and the concluding envelope refrain line הודוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ.

The poetic analysis of the Egyptian Hallel demonstrates the interaction between literary technique and thematic flow. This interaction clarifies the message of the poet, as he tells the story of יהוה--Praiseworthy Deliverer.

V. CONCLUSION

The Egyptian Hallel is a unit when considered through the methods and techniques of discourse analysis. The discourse is marked as a macrostructure by its internal cohesion. It exhibits coherence due to the over-arching theme of יהוה--Praiseworthy Deliverer, and the

26. Dahood explains the significance of word pairs in the grammar section of the commentary, clearly stating that such pairs are quite normal in Hebrew and acquire significance when unusually placed (*Psalms*, 3.xx-xxi).

stages of discourse progression are evident, particularly the element of prominence that marks the discourse peak at Psalm 117. The emphasis found in the discourse peak is the universal quality expressed in the call to praise יהוה for his role in the deliverance of his people. In his comments on the Passover *Haggadah*, Elie Wiesel affirms this observation. Regarding the text, "in every generation, every individual must feel as if he personally had come out of Egypt." Wiesel notes, "the text does not say that every *Jew* must feel as if he had come out of Egypt. It says 'every individual.' And here we find the universal dimension of Jewish experience."²⁷

Discourse analysis is to the exegete what a symphony score is to the conductor: it provides an opportunity to examine material at close range, to identify outstanding features, and to gain an understanding of the whole. However, just as a symphony score requires a symphony, a baton, and an audience before it may be heard, so the scriptures require interpretation and proclamation. The exegete must apply all available parameters to the study of scripture, including the history of interpretation.

27. Elie Wiesel, *A Passover Haggadah* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993) 69.