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Songs in a New Key: The Psalmic Structure of the Chronicler's Hymn (1 Chr 16:8-36)

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MARK A. THRONTVEIT  

1. Introduction  

The primary objective of chapters 13–15 in the Chronicler's narrative entails a description of the tortuous journey of the ark of the covenant, the visible symbol of God's presence, to its permanent site in Jerusalem. In chapter 16, the Chronicler celebrates the meeting of that objective with a great hymn of thanksgiving constructed from portions of three existing psalms (Ps 105:1–15 = vv. 8–22; Ps 96:1b, 2b–10b, 11a–13a = vv. 23–33; Ps 106:1, 47–48 = vv. 34–36).  

Scholarship has long been aware of the Chronicler's hymn, yet matters of unity and authorship have dominated scholarly interest until fairly recently.  

Author's note: It is a pleasure to offer this essay on the intersection of Psalms and Chronicles in honor of Patrick D. Miller, tireless advocate for biblical readings of theology and theological readings of the Bible; passionate preacher of God's word; editor, author, and Doktorvater who, twenty-two years ago, managed to find these marvelous psalms in the bowels of Chronicles and surprise me with them as part of my Hebrew exam.  

1. In this study, “the Chronicler” will be used to designate the anonymous author of 1–2 Chronicles, a work composed in Jerusalem sometime during the Persian Period. The books of Ezra–Nehemiah, while sharing some of the concerns of the Chronicler and coming from roughly the same time, are from a different hand. For a concise treatment of these issues, see Ralph W. Klein, “Chronicles, Book of 1–2,” ABD 1:992–1002.  


3. Recent scholarship affirms the text's unity. Those who question it essentially follow Martin Noth, who regards vv. 5–38 and 41–42 as secondary (The Chronicler's History [trans.
directed to consult the relevant sections of a good Psalms commentary! This, however, neglects the importance of context and falsely suggests that these psalms mean the same thing in both canonical settings. Just as a Sousa march sounds brighter when transposed and played in a higher key, so the Chronicler’s transposition of these songs to David’s time results in a shift in the character of their message for the post-exilic community and, I would argue, for us.

Fortunately, the growing interest in synchronic approaches to biblical texts has emphasized matters of structure and context over such diachronic matters as unity and authorship. This has resulted in a small but important body of literature devoted to the analysis of these songs in a new key as a psalmic hymn in its own right, with a particular setting, function, message, and audience.

Trent C. Butler was the first to seriously challenge investigations limited to descriptions of textual differences and the question of authorship by demonstrating that the hymn conforms well with the Chronicler’s familiar theological perspective.4 Soon thereafter, J. A. Loader offered a detailed structural outline of the hymn based upon rhetorical and stylistic observations.5 Andrew E. Hill furthered Loader’s rhetorical analysis by pointing to the chiastic ordering of the imperatives that introduce the underlying psalms (“Give thanks,” v. 8; “Sing,” vv. 9, 23; “Give thanks,” v. 34).6 Building upon another of Hill’s observations, R. Mark Shipp suggested that the levitical activities prescribed in v. 46 (“give thanks,” “praise,” and “remember”) structure the Chronicler’s hymn and provide a “connective echo”7 that anchors the hymn in its narrative context.8 Most recently, John W. Kleinig, in a study of the basis, function, and significance of choral music in Chronicles, has offered a thorough literary analysis of the hymn.9


7. Ibid., 99.
Tamara Eskenazi captures the state of this emerging scholarly recognition of the hymn's poetic character and reminds us of its unusual nature when she states, "The thanksgiving psalm extols God's wondrous deeds in hyperbole that is common in poetry. The use of poetry, however, is uncommon in Chronicles." Nevertheless, despite general scholarly recognition of the hymn's poetic character, there is little scholarly consensus regarding the relationship between its poetic character and its contextual function and message. Is its purpose to attribute the contemporary practice of psalm singing to David? Is its purpose primarily liturgical, or is there an element of proclamation present in the Chronicler's reworking? Solutions to such questions are further hindered by the lack of consensus regarding the hymn's structure. Most scholars find four divisions, but divisions of two, three, five, and even eight regularly appear in the literature. Unfortunately, rationales for these proposed structures are rarely provided.

13. Johnstone, 1 and 2 Chronicles, 175: vv. 8–22; 23–36 (but see n. 12 above). Sara Japhet, First and Second Chronicles: A Commentary (OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 316: vv. 8–33; 34–36 (but see n. 14 below). In addition to his structural analysis (see n. 15 below) Kleinig also sees two main sections, a psalm of thanksgiving in vv. 8–34 and a summary petition in vv. 35–36a (The Lord's Song, 142–44).
15. Kleinig, The Lord's Song, 143–44: vv. 8; 9–22; 23–30; 31–33; 34.
In his discussion of poetry and interpretation, Patrick D. Miller addresses the importance of both exegetical and stylistic evidence in the analysis of texts:

This means that poetry and interpretation are not matters that should be dealt with separately; rather, a deeper sensitivity to the poetic character of the text can enhance our understanding, and attention to poetic features may aid the interpretive process and its results. Even more, they may do much of the task of enabling us to appropriate the word of the psalm or the biblical poem as our own.\(^\text{18}\)

Far too often, the perceived development of themes determines the structural analysis of texts, without reference to corroborating stylistic evidence. This has certainly been true for treatments of 1 Chr 16:8–36.

Miller’s plea for the integration of the stylistic aspects of texts is also found in another article:

The full hearing of the Psalms will be greatly enhanced when the familiar tendency to abstract content from form or to empty form of its content is overcome. To know the Psalms are poetic is not to forget that they are Scripture. To read and hear them as Scripture requires that one receive them also as poetry. From either direction, understanding is all.\(^\text{19}\)

The present study echoes this claim that identification of structure leads to clearer perception of function and message. This will be illustrated by offering an examination of 1 Chr 16:8–36 that is sensitive to both thematic and stylistic evidence. The investigation begins with an annotated translation displaying what I believe to be the major divisions of the hymn, followed by an examination of three structural analyses seeking acceptance today. An argument for my own proposal and a brief discussion of its ramifications conclude the study.

**II. Translation and Division of 1 Chr 16:8–36**

In the following translation I have intended to be quite literal. The translation essentially follows that of the RSV (except in word order), sacrificing eloquence in order to display the structure of the individual divisions and their arrangement. Justification of the divisions themselves appears in section IV.

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The Psalmic Structure of the Chronicler's Hymn

1 Chr 16:8-36

I. Thanksgiving Hymn: vv. 8-34
   A. Introductory Calls to Praise

8 O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the peoples his deeds!
9 Sing about him, sing hymns concerning him; tell of all his wonderful works!
10 Glory in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice who seek the LORD!
11 Seek out the LORD and "his strength;" seek his face regularly!
12 Remember the (his) wonderful works that he has done; his signs, and the judgments of his mouth,
13 O seed of Israel his servant, O children of Jacob his chosen ones!

B. Thanks for Past "Judgments"

14 He, the LORD, is our God; his judgments are in all the earth.
15 He remembers forever his covenant, the word he commanded to a thousand generation(s),
16 that he cut with Abraham, even his oath to Isaac,
17 that he established as a statute to Jacob, to Israel (as) an everlasting covenant,
18 by saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan, (as) the portion of your inheritance."
19 When they were an insignificant people, few in number and merely aliens there,

20. For this use of the preposition see P. A. H. de Boer, "Cantate Domino: An Erroneous Dative?" in Remembering All the Way (OTS 21; ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leiden: Brill, 1981) 55-67; cited in Kleinig, The Lord’s Song, 139.
21. I.e., "the ark"; cf. Ps 78:61; 132:8; see NJPSV (Tanakh).
22. ?תֵּבָה has the sense of "regularly" here as opposed to its usual sense of "continually"; see Japhet, 1 & II Chronicles, 311.
24. Reading 3ms perfect יָד with Ps 105:8, LXXB (LXXA1 imperfect participle), RSV, NEB, NIV, and REB. The MT reads 2mp imperative יָד, "Remember." Recent scholarship prefers the MT and sees it as one of several chronicistic alterations that make the psalm contemporary. While the concept of God’s remembering the covenant is well established (see Gen 9:15, 16; Exod 2:24; 6:5; Lev 26:42, 45; Ps 106:45; 111:3) there are no other instances of the people remembering, or being called to remember, the covenant. Furthermore, the uncontested presence of יָד in v. 12 has already called the community to remembrance.
25. Reading the 3mp suffix פֶּתַח with Ps 105:12, the LXX, the Vulgate, RSV, NAB, NASB, NIV, and NRSV. The MT, the Peshitta, the Targum, NJB, and NJPSV (Tanakh) read
they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people,
he allowed no one to oppress them, and warned kings on their account:
"Touch not my anointed ones; and to my prophets do no harm!"

C. Thanks for Present Sovereignty

Sing about the LORD, all the earth; proclaim from day to day his
deliverance!

Declare among the nations his glory; among all the peoples his wonderful
works!

For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; indeed, revered is he
above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are nothing, but the LORD the heavens has
made.

Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place.
Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength,
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name, bring an offering and come before him,
worship the LORD in holy majesty!

B. Thanks for Future "Rule"

Tremble at his presence, all the earth! Then will the world be
established, never will it totter!

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, that they may say among
the nations, "The LORD is king!"

Let the sea and all that fills it roar; let the field and all within it exult!

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a 2mp suffix הָיוֹת ("when you were"). A 3mp reading connects v. 19 with what follows,
a 2mp reading ties v. 19 to what precedes. Both translations are equally possible. The
Chronicler’s interests and audience argue for the latter, hence the recent shift in scholar­ly acceptance. Structural considerations may favor the former, however, as will be ar­gued in the third section of this study. On the ambiguity, see Japhet, I & II Chronicles, 319.

Ps 105:14 reads יָדָע לְפָּרָע.

Ps 96:6, 8, 10a are omitted, creating a new parallel between vv. 1 and 2.

Ps 96:6: יָהַשֵׁב בִּצַּלָּמָהוּ, "in his sanctuary," for המְּבָנִים. The Chronicler alters the source to
make the psalm fit David’s time before the building of the temple.

Ps 96:8: יָבֹא אלָיו, “into his courts,” for יָבֹא אלָיו. See previous note.

Ps 96:10a appears at 1 Chr 16:31b where the imperative has become a jussive.

Ps 96:10b is omitted. The verbs are clearly Niphal imperficts suggesting, along
with the הָיוֹת, the future aspect.

The Chronicler has changed an imperative to a jussive. Jussives (precatives) with
The Psalmic Structure of the Chronicler's Hymn

35 Then will the trees of the forest rejoice before the LORD, when he comes to rule (judge) the earth!

A: Concluding Call to Praise

34 O give thanks to the LORD! For he is good, for his covenant loyalty is forever!

II. Concluding Liturgy: vv. 35–36

Liturgical Summons

35b Say:

Petition

35b "Save us, O God our savior, [35] gather us and deliver us from the nations, to give thanks to your holy name, and to glory in your praise."

Benediction

36a "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, for ever and ever."

Congregational Response

Then all the people said, “Amen!” and “Praise the LORD!”

III. Three Structural Analyses

Contemporary scholarship has essentially offered three options regarding the structure of the Chronicler’s hymn. Virtually every proposal presented above appears as a variant of one of these three. To these we now turn. The three representative treatments are by R. Mark Shipp, John W. Kleinig, and James W. Watts.


34. The point of the three middle divisions, as well as Psalm 96, is the coming rule of the LORD (v. 31b = Ps 96:10). “Rule” is often a better translation of than “judge” because of the latter’s legal connotations in English. See NJPSV (Tanakh), NAB, and James Luther Mays, Psalms (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1994) 309.


R. Mark Shipp: “Remember, Praise (Sing), and Give Thanks!”

The most common structural analysis sees a correspondence between the main divisions of the Chronicler’s hymn and the three psalm fragments of the underlying sources (Ps 105:1-15; 96:1b, 2b-13a; 106:1, 47-48). Of the many scholars making use of this schema, Loader, Hill, and especially Shipp have provided stylistic rationales for their proposals.39

Shipp begins with Hill’s suggestion that 1 Chr 16:4b provides the structural key to the thanksgiving hymn: “And he set before the ark of Yahweh some of the ministering Levites, for the purpose of causing remembrance, giving thanks, and praising Yahweh, the God of Israel” (my emphasis). Shipp proposes that the three infinitive constructs of v. 4b correspond to both the major divisions in the hymn as well as the psalmic sources appropriated by the Chronicler, as follows:

1. An “Introductory Section” (vv. 8-14) in which the three verbal roots of v. 4b appear in reverse order הָלַל, “give thanks,” v. 8; שָלֹוהֶה, “praise,” v. 10; and זָרַע, “remember,” v. 12) and that corresponds to Ps 105:1-7.
2. A “Remember Section” (vv. 15-22), introduced by the imperative זָרַע (“remember”; v. 15), that corresponds to Ps 105:8-15, a recital of God’s covenant loyalty that Israel is urged to recall.
3. A “Praise Section” (vv. 23-33), introduced by the imperative שָׁלֵה ("sing"; v. 23), that corresponds to Psalm 96, a hymn celebrating God’s rule. 40
4. A “Giving-Thanks Section” (vv. 34-36), introduced by the imperative הָלַל ("give thanks"; v. 34), that corresponds to Ps 106:1, 47-48.

Shipp is to be commended for his attempt to blend rhetorical and thematic evidence. Nevertheless, a number of points require discussion. The observation that the repetition of the three infinitive constructs of v. 4b in vv. 8, 10, and 12 serves as a “connective echo” linking the hymn to its immediate narrative context seems well founded. Why the division should continue through v. 14, however, is more problematic. All of the interpretive benefits derived from this observation would still apply in a division ending

39. Other scholars who see the three underlying psalms as structurally constitutive include Loader, who claims the correct sequence of vv. 30-33 is 30a, 32b-30b, 31a-32a, 32b-31a, 31b (“Remember,” 71-72), followed by De Vries, I and II Chronicles, 351; Hill, “Patchwork Poetry,” 100, followed by Selman, 1 Chronicles, 168-72; Balentine, “You Can’t Pray a Lie,” 255; Allen, 1, 2 Chronicles, 116-18; and Japhet, I & II Chronicles, 312.

40. Shipp, “Remember,” 34 n. 15 is not accurate. Based upon the rest of his essay I have reconstructed what I take his meaning to be. Surely his “(2)” requires a reference to vv. 15-22, and the psalmic reference must be Ps 105:1-15, not “105:15.” His “(3)” would then refer to vv. 23-33 (presently unmarked), and vv. 34-36 would become (4) not “(3)” as in the note.
The Psalmic Structure of the Chronicler's Hymn

at either v. 12 or v. 13. In fact, the three verbs, highlighted by the repetition, suggest an ABA' pattern in which vv. 8 and 9 (introduced by וַיִּשָּׁבֵב) and v. 12 (introduced by וַיִּשָּׁבֵב) frame vv. 10 and 11 (introduced by וַיִּשָּׁבֵב). The repetition of וַיִּשָּׁבֵב ("his wonderful works") in the A and A' segments (vv. 9b, 12a) and two forms of שָׁמַע ("seek") in the B segment (שָׁמַע, "seekers of," v. 10b; and שָׁמַע, "seek!" v. 11b) that frame yet another synonym of "seek," יָשָׁר (v. 11a), further supports this arrangement. Verse 13 would then close the division by naming the, as yet, unnamed addressees of the preceding calls to praise God.

One assumes Shipp continues the division through v. 14 because of his decision to use the imperatives gleaned from the infinitive constructs in v. 4b as divisional markers. The second division (vv. 15-22) provides the strongest evidence for this approach in that this "Remember Section" does indeed begin with וַיִּשָּׁבֵב and contains material that Israel might reasonably be urged to recall. It should be noted, however, that Shipp here follows a recent shift in scholarship. Contemporary interpreters maintain that the 2mp imperative form of "remember" found in the MT is original, and is therefore a tendentious change from the 3ms perfect form ("he [God] remembers") found in Ps 105:15. But this is by no means certain. The textual evidence is mixed (see n. 24 above), displaying confusion in the transmission of the LXX as well as the MT. Yet, even Butler, whose seminal article in 1978 still makes the strongest case for reading the hymn as a meticulously crafted chronistic appropriation of these psalms aimed at a particular audience, makes no mention of the supposed alteration. 44 Furthermore, וַיִּשָּׁבֵב is not a key term for the Chronicler. It appears only five times in 1-2 Chronicles, three of them in the hymn (i.e., from earlier psalmic source material; vv. 4, 12, 15); the other two in 2 Chr 6:42 and 24:22. Finally, if the Chronicler has introduced this change it would be the only imperative found in a division which, as will be argued later, is comprised of narrative and speech.

Concerning the third division, Shipp candidly admits that "The Praise Section" begins with the imperative וַיִּשָּׁבֵב ("Sing!") and that "this presents an obstacle to (his) analysis."45 He then argues that "praise" is the theme of the whole section, maintains that "sing" and "praise" are synonymous terms for the Chronicler, and points to the pu'āl participle of "praise" in v. 25a.46 While this is true, it is somewhat beside the point and calls into

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42. Shipp, "Remember," 36.
43. On this last point, see Balentine who otherwise strictly follows Shipp's proposal but here refrains from citing וַיִּשָּׁבֵב and only mentions the appearance of יָשָׁר, "praised!" ("You Can't Pray a Lie," 255).
question a structural proposal that features introductory imperatives repeated from the narrative context as division markers.

Shipp's fourth division, "The Give-Thanks Section" (vv. 34-36), while meeting the criterion of an introductory imperative repeated from v. 4b, raises questions of a form-critical nature. Kleinig's observation that the "liturgical rubric in v. 35a . . . separates the song of thanksgiving from the petition with its doxology" is pertinent here. 44 Two-thirds of this section devoted to the giving of thanks consists of petition (v. 35, though המודה does appear in a purpose clause connected with the petition), benediction (v. 36a), and congregational response (v. 36b). Similar difficulties arise in the other proposals that assume the underlying psalms form the structural framework for the Chronicler's hymn.

John W. Kleinig: "Give Thanks to the Lord, Sing, and Remember!"

A second approach to the structure of the Chronicler's hymn is exemplified in John W. Kleinig's detailed examination of the theological significance of choral music in the books of Chronicles. 45 Kleinig begins by noting a number of devices that unify the psalm and distinguish its chief parts. 46

1. The liturgical rubric מֹדֵעַ, "Say," separates the song of thanksgiving (vv. 8-34) from the petition and following doxology (vv. 35-36a).

2. The song of thanksgiving, itself, is marked by the use of an inclusio with מֹדֵעַ לְדוֹרָה, "Give thanks to the Lord" (vv. 8, 34).

3. An inclusio formed by מַעֲצַמְתֶּךָ, "all the earth" (vv. 23, 30), marks the intervening verses as a separate unit.

4. The repetition of two other imperatives (besides מֹדֵעַ) introduces two parallel poetic units: מָדַע, "sing" (vv. 9, 23), separates vv. 9-22 from 23-30, and מָרָא, "remember," (vv. 12, 15) identifies two segments within vv. 9-22.

5. Six common terms act as "catch words" that unify the material: מָדַע, "people," vv. 8, 20, 24, 26, 28; מָדַע, "nation," vv. 20, 24, 31, 35; מָדַע, "name," vv. 8, 10, 29, 35; מָדַע, "holy," vv. 10, 29, 35; מָדַע, "give thanks," vv. 8, 34, 35; מָדַע, "praise," vv. 10, 25, 35.

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44. Kleinig, The Lord's Song, 142.
45. Ibid., 133-48. Leslie C. Allen's approach in his recent commentary mirrors Kleinig's. While he collapses v. 8 into the following division and the congregational petition and response into the previous division, his designations "a call to Israel to praise God (vv. 8-22), a call for praise throughout the earth (vv. 23-30), a call for cosmic praise (vv. 31-33), and a call for Israel not only to praise but also to pray that fresh potential for praise may be theirs (v. 34-36)" are virtually identical, ("First and Second Chronicles," 3:401).
46. Kleinig, The Lord's Song, 142.
The Psalmic Structure of the Chronicler's Hymn

In addition, each new section and subsection is introduced by calls to praise expressed in imperative and jussive forms, frequently in clusters (vv. 8, 9, 12, 15, 23, 28, 31, 34). Building upon the work of Keil, Becker, and Haumann, Kleinig emphasizes that the originally unspecified audience of all these calls to praise moves from “Israel” (v. 13), through “the earth with all its ethnic groups” (vv. 23, 30), to “the whole cosmos” (vv. 31-32). Kleinig then offers the following structural outline based upon his observations:

A. The Psalm of Thanksgiving: 1 Chr 16:8-34

1. General Call to Thanksgiving: 16:8
2. Israel’s Praise: 16:9-22
   a. Call to musical praise (9-11)
   b. Double call to remembrance (12-22)
      (1) remembrance of the LORD’s works (12-14)
         a) call to remember the LORD (12)
         b) identity and status of audience (13)
         c) content of remembrance (14)
      (2) remembrance of the LORD’s covenant (15-22)
         a) call to remember the covenant with the ancestors (15-18)
         b) Israel protected as result of this covenant (19-22)
   a. The praise of the whole earth (23-27)
      (1) call to singing (23-24)
      (2) reasons for song (25-27)
   b. The praise of its peoples (28-30a)
      (1) call to prostration in sacrificial worship (28-30a)
      (2) reason for prostration (30b)
4. Cosmic Praise: 16:31-33
   a. Command for universal proclamation of the LORD’s kingship (31-32)
   b. Result of proclamation (33)
5. Final Call to Thanksgiving: 16:34

B. Summary Petition: 1 Chr 16:35-36a

1. Petition for Israel’s Deliverance (35)
2. Doxology (36a)

47. Ibid., 143.
49. Kleinig, The Lord’s Song, 143-44. I have added the key structuring words in Hebrew.
Kleinig's sensitive reading of 1 Chr 16:8–36 takes careful notice of the thematic development of the hymn without overlooking its stylistic elements. Each of the stylistic devices Kleinig isolates is worthy of comment. To begin with, the separation of the song of thanksgiving from the petition and its doxology by means of the liturgical rubric, “and say” (v. 35a), is surely correct. This, along with the consequent recognition of לכי אלוהי as an inclusio marking vv. 8 and 34 as an introduction and conclusion, constitutes his most important contribution to the structural analysis of this text.

The supposed inclusio formed by the occurrence of כל הלואג, “all the earth,” in vv. 23 and 30, however, is less certain. The structural significance of this device, for Kleinig, is to isolate a section of “international praise” in which “all the earth” (vv. 23–27) and “its peoples” (vv. 28–30) engage in praise and sacrificial worship of the LORD. This section is preceded by a section of “Israel's praise” (vv. 9–22) and followed by a section of “cosmic praise” (vv. 31–33). As virtually all analyses take v. 23 as the start of a new section and v. 33 as the end of a section, these seem secure as boundaries. At issue is whether one or two sections lie between these boundaries, and if two, what their extent is. Shipp, and those who see the three psalms as the hymn’s structural matrix, consider vv. 23–33 (= Psalm 96) as one section and assign no structural function to the repetition of כל הלואג. Those who see two sections either begin the second at v. 30 (e.g., Watts, see next section) or, with Kleinig, begin the second section with v. 31. Clearly, both analyses are possible. The כל הלואג in v. 30 either indicates the beginning of a new section or forms an inclusio with v. 23. For now, it should be noticed that כל הלואג has already appeared (albeit with the preposition בן) in v. 14 where, as will be shown later, it initiates the primary structuring device of the hymn.

Kleinig also finds great significance in the repetition of the imperatives “sing” (vv. 9, 23) and “remember” (vv. 12, 15) that introduce new parallel units. Kleinig’s elegant approach to the structure of the hymn based upon the placement of these imperatives invites acceptance. Three questions remain, however. First, one could agree with the major inclusio in vv. 8 and 34 without limiting the introduction to v. 8. This decision leaves vv. 9–11 somewhat isolated between the initial “give thanks” and the “remember” of v. 12. Kleinig’s suggestion that these verses form a segment of “musical praise,” while conducive to his overall thesis and consistent with the structuring role of “sing,” is not compelling. Of the six imperatives only the first two (“sing” and “sing praises,” v. 9a) and the jussive (“rejoice,” v. 10b) are consistently seen in musical contexts. The remaining four imperatives (“tell,” v. 9b; “glory,” v. 10a; and “seek,” whether וודא or וקסב, v. 11b) are not. Japhet suggests that they are most commonly associated with the ark.50 This seems to be a better explanation for their appearance at this juncture.

Second, this decision leaves the identity of the addressees of all those imperatives unknown until the middle of the second subsection of the second division (v. 13). As demonstrated in the discussion of Shipp’s approach, vv. 8–13 display an overall ABA’ structure that binds them together while still incorporating the three infinitive constructs of v. 4b and maintaining the identification of the addressees in the same unit.

Third, again, as in Shipp’s approach, much structural weight is attached to the Chronicler’s supposed tendentious change from “He (God) remembers” (Ps 105:8) to the plural imperative “You (Israel) remember” in v. 15. The tenuous nature of this approach was discussed there. Rejection of the MT reading, here, would eliminate Kleinig’s double call to remembrance in vv. 12–22.

Finally, the list of catch words that unify the material should be expanded to include מָרֵא הָאֱלֹהִים (to the LORD), “(to) the LORD” (vv. 8, 10–11, 14, 23, 25–26, 28a, 29b, 29a, 29b, 31, 33–34, 36a, 36b); and אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהִים, “God, gods” (vv. 14, 25–26, 35). In addition, the following repetitions tie two of the three psalm-fragments together: שָׁמַע, “judge, judgments” (vv. 12, 14, 33); מַלְאָךְ יְהֹוָה, “his wonderful works” (vv. 9, 12, 24); מָלָיִם, “kings, be king” (vv. 21, 31); וַעֲנָיִם, “strength [ark]” (vv. 11, 27, 28); וְשָׁמַעֳנֵה, “salvation, save” (vv. 23, 35); and עֶדֶן, “eternal, forever” (vv. 15, 17, 34, 36a [twice]).

James W. Watts: “A Levitical Medley”

In his investigation of hymns set within Hebrew narrative, James W. Watts provides the clearest articulation to date of the third structural proposal for 1 Chr 16:8–36, the outline of which follows:

1. Invocations to worship (vv. 8–13)
2. Exhortations regarding the covenant and reminders of God’s faithfulness to the ancestors (vv. 14–22)
3. Call to recognize Yahweh among the nations and a declaration of Yahweh’s superiority over foreign gods (vv. 23–29)
4. Nature’s reverence for Yahweh (vv. 30–33)
5. Climactic exhortation to thanksgiving (v. 34)
6. Communal plea for salvation that Yahweh may be worshiped (v. 35)
7. Blessing and congregational response (v. 36).51

Watts’s proposal resembles the previous two in some respects while being quite different in others. Like Kleinig, but unlike Shipp, Watts and other proponents of this proposal do not feel constrained to maintain the individual structures of the underlying psalms, as indicated by the definite

51. Watts, *Psalm and Story*, 156. Other scholars who share this proposal include Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 128–29; Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 175; and Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, 140–42.
break at v. 29. Again, like Kleinig, but unlike Shipp, proponents of this proposal tend to separate the petition, doxology, and community response of vv. 35–36 from the thanksgiving hymn proper of vv. 8–34. Like Shipp, but unlike Kleinig, these proponents tend to see vv. 14–22 as a single unit. But, in contrast to both Kleinig and Shipp, none of the proponents represented here has offered a rationale for their structural analysis beyond showing the development of them.

Watts has suggested an outline that presents a thematic development of the Chronicler’s hymn. This accounts for the general scholarly acceptance it enjoys. Nevertheless, a literary justification of this proposed structure has not appeared. While I do not necessarily concur with the exegetical results or the interpretation this thematic approach has uncovered, I do agree with the structural divisions proposed. The following proposal seeks to justify that structure while remaining open to other hermeneutical possibilities.

IV. A New Proposal

In some respects, my proposal is not “new” at all. The three proposals examined above all provide valuable insights into the structure of the Chronicler’s hymn that I gladly incorporate. The most important structuring devices are as follows:

1. With Shipp and Hill, I agree that the imperatives “give thanks,” “praise,” and “remember” in vv. 8, 10, and 12 of the hymn are best seen as a “connective echo” to the infinitive construct forms of these verbs in v. 4b. I also agree with Shipp that the reverse order of their appearance is significant. I would maintain, however, that this significance is limited to the identification of the hymn’s initial division in vv. 8–13.

2. With Kleinig, I agree that the liturgical rubric הלאמר (imperative: “Say!”) divides the text into two major parts. These are the hymn proper (vv. 8–34) and a liturgical section comprising a summons to pray (v. 35a), a petition (v. 35b), a doxology/benediction (v. 36a), and a congregational response (v. 36b).

3. Each of these major parts is defined by an inclusio: the hymn by הלאמר (vv. 8, 34) and the liturgical section by הלאמר (v. 35a) and הלאמר (v. 36b).

4. Within the hymn proper, the repetition of the phrase (בכלאר), “among the earth,” in vv. 14, 23, and 30 defines three central divisions: vv. 14–22; 23–29; and 30–33. The addition of vv. 8–13 as an introductory call to praise/thanksgiving and v. 34 as a conclusion, results in five divisions for the hymn itself. These divisions generally correspond to those proposed by Williamson, Watts, and Thompson on exegetical or thematic grounds.
In addition, each of the five divisions displays its own structural integrity in terms of both form and content. The first division (vv. 8–13) has been discussed to some extent in the reviews of Shipp and Kleinig. There it was maintained that the introductory \( \text{לָתָן} \) (v. 8) forms an inclusio with v. 34, framing the entire hymn of thanksgiving. In addition, the three infinitive constructs of the programmatic v. 4b appear in reverse order in vv. 8, 10, and 12 establishing an ABA’ or ring structure with vv. 8–9, 12–13 framing vv. 10–11. The repetition of \( \text{נָקַבְנָה} \) in vv. 9 and 12 strengthens this structure as does the matching ABA’ alternation of synonyms for “seek” in the B portion (\( \text{שְׁכֹךְ} \); vv. 10b, 11b; \( \text{שְׁדֵד} \), v. 11a). The division closes in v. 13 with the delayed announcement of the addressees of the imperative calls to praise.

The second division (vv. 14–22) opens with the statement, “He is the \( \text{לֹא} \) our God; his judgments are in all the earth.” This first appearance of \( \text{נָקַבְנָה} \) signals the beginning of the second division. The next two appearances will mark the beginnings of the third and fourth divisions. Following this programmatic confession, the remaining eight verses form a repeated pattern that has more to do with narrative than poetry. This pattern consists of three verses of continuous narrative (vv. 15–17; 19–21), followed by God’s direct speech (vv. 18, 22). Note the presence of \( \text{וַיִּשָּׁבֶּה} \)-consecutive in the narrative sections (vv. 17, 20, 21) and the addition of “saying,” immediately before the speech in v. 22 by KJV, NKJV, ASV, and NRSV. Both of these parallel, four verse segments provide theological warrant for the creedal statement of v. 4 by illustrating God’s remembrance of the covenant (vv. 15–18) and God’s protection during the wilderness wanderings (vv. 19–22).

The middle division (vv. 23–29) is marked in two ways. First, as in the second and fourth divisions, \( \text{נָקַבְנָה} \) in v. 23 signals a new beginning. Second, with the exception of \( \text{רָדַּד} \) (vv. 8, 34), that functions as an inclusio for the hymn proper, \( \text{נָקַבְנָה} \) (“sing”; vv. 9a, 23) is the only imperative repeated in the hymn. As such, it draws attention to this central division.

Unfortunately, the end is not so clearly marked. Shipp’s proposal, that Psalm 96 forms the third division, continues through v. 33. As we have seen, however, there are problems with dividing the hymn this way in its new setting in Chronicles. Kleinig wants to close his division devoted to “international praise” after v. 30 in order to incorporate the inclusio formed by \( \text{נָקַבְנָה} \), leaving vv. 31–33 as a fourth division, devoted to “cosmic praise.” While Kleinig’s analysis of vv. 31–33 works well on the level of theme or content, he is unable to produce any stylistic or literary devices to isolate this fourth major division. Textual matters also contribute to the complexity of the problem. The Chronicler has altered the parallelism of vv. 28–30 by moving Ps 96:10a, “Say among the nations, ‘the \( \text{לֹא} \) is king!’” to a

52. For the rejection of \( \text{רָדַּד} \) in v. 15 see n. 24 above.
position following Ps 96:11a (1 Chr 16:31a) and by changing the imperative to a jussive. He has also omitted Ps 96:10c, “He will judge the peoples with equity.” This means the triple appearance of “Ascribe to the LORD” (vv. 28–29a, followed by “bring an offering and come before him,” in v. 29b) is mirrored and extended in an extra, final colon in v. 29c, “Worship the LORD.” The poetic device of the extra colon in v. 29, coupled with the inclusio formed by the fourfold repetition of לילדה א in vv. 28–29 and v. 23 suggests that this central division extends from vv. 23 to 29.

The fourth division (vv. 30–33) is also marked with לילדה א. The inclusio formed between מְשַׁמֵּר, “before him” (v. 30), 54 and מְשַׁמֵּר, “before the LORD” (v. 33) serves to frame this division characterized by a number of jussives summoning nature’s praise.

The terse fifth division (v. 34) is defined by its introductory imperative לילדה א that, together with v. 8, forms an inclusio for the entire hymn.

The following outline summarizes my proposal. As with Kleinig’s proposal, I have indicated the relevant Hebrew structural elements in the margins:

I. Thanksgiving Hymn (vv. 8–34)
   A Introductory Calls to Thanksgiving (vv. 8–13)
      B For Past “Judgments” [كشف] (vv. 14–22)
      C For Present Sovereignty (23–29)
         B’ For Future “Rule” [كشف] (vv. 30–33)
   A’ Concluding Call to Thanksgiving (v. 34)

II. Concluding Liturgy (vv. 35–36a)
   A Liturgical Summons (v. 35a)
   B Petition (v. 35b)
   B’ Benediction (v. 36a)
   A’ Congregational Response (v. 36b)

It is easily seen in this outline that the five divisions of the hymn, and (possibly) the concluding liturgy, have been concentrically arranged. The introductory and concluding calls to thanksgiving (A, A’) share the thematic phrase of the hymn, לילדה א. As we have seen, the three central

53. Ps 29:1–2 displays the same three plus one, staircase trope but without the enclosed colon.

54. A concern to provide boundaries for the division may account for the Chronicler’s otherwise inexplicable alteration of his source from מְשַׁמֵּר, “before him” (literally, “from his face”; Ps 96:9b) to מְשַׁמֵּר.
divisions (B, C, B') share the phrase מָלְאַכְתָּם (2) and are identified by its presence. Framing the central section, C, sections B and B' are thematically linked by מָלְאַכְתָּם (vv. 21, 31); מָלְאַכְתָּם (vv. 20, 31); and מָלְאַכְתָּם (vv. 14, 33). The central division begins with the hymn's only repeated imperative, מָלְאַכְתָּם. That the Chronicler's hymn falls into a concentric arrangement should come as no surprise. Japhet, Selman, and Kleinig have all recognized the concentric structure of the entire chapter: 55

A  David blesses the people (vv. 1-3; cf 2 Sam 6:17-19a)
   B  David appoints Levites for worship in Jerusalem (vv. 4-7)
       C  The Chronicler's Hymn (vv. 8-36)
   B'  David appoints Levites and priests for worship at Gibeon (vv. 37-42)
A'  David blesses his house (v. 43; cf. 2 Sam 6:19b-20a)

This analysis suggests that the Chronicler's hymn is a rhetorically sophisticated example of the classic hymn of praise: a call to praise the Lord followed by a motive clause giving the reasons for praise. 56 Structurally speaking, A and A', as pure calls to praise/thanksgiving, surround three motivations for that praise that progress temporally from the past through the present to the future, in BCB', as follows:

- Verses 8–13 provide introductory calls to praise concluding with the addressees.
- Verses 14–22 supply the initial motivation for praise, namely, the recitation of God's mighty acts of judgment/salvation (v. 14b) in the past, as indicated by the perfect form of נַעֲרֵי and the waw-consecutive imperfect (i.e., preterite) verbs. The motivations include God's remembrance of covenantal promises to their ancestors (vv. 15–18) and protection from hostile neighbors (vv. 19–22).
- Verses 23–29 combine the formal elements of praise in a new way. Here, additional calls to praise (vv. 23–24, 28–29) frame two motive sections. The first chiastically asserts at the very heart of the hymn (vv. 25–26) the present sovereignty of Yahweh over "all the gods of the nations":

55. Japhet, I & II Chronicles, 312; Selman, 1 Chronicles, 166; and especially Kleinig, who confirms the structure by listing several thematic links between paired divisions (The Lord's Song, 144–45).
A  For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised;
B  indeed, revered is he above all gods.
B' For all the gods of the peoples are nothing;
A' But Yahweh the heavens has made.

This first motivation for praise signaled its presence with a double use of causal $\because$, "for," so characteristic of the hymn of praise, at the start of both vv. 25 and 26. The second motivation for praise reverts to recitation, as in vv. 15–22. Here, however, God's present characteristics are recited in nominal sentences that imply and emphasize the present tense, "Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place" (v. 27).

If the previous two divisions provide reasons for praising the Lord based upon what God has done in the past and God's present sovereignty, vv. 30–33 boldly proclaim that the Chronicler's post-exilic community "ain't seen nothin' yet!" Imperfect verbal forms and a participle are used to make the point that "all the earth" should "tremble," now, before this faithful yet sovereign God because the world is about to be divinely "established, never to totter" (v. 30). The results will be so great that all of nature: heaven and earth, sea, field, forest and all they contain will confess to the nations that "Yahweh rules!" when he comes.

But not yet. The Chronicler's community, insignificant, few in number and regarded as aliens in their own land (v. 19), yet also encouraged by the testimony of the Chronicler's hymn to their God's past, present, and future devotion, are invited to "take it to the Lord in prayer" in the concluding liturgy that follows the hymn (vv. 35–36). In the petition, the community asks for salvation and deliverance, that their praise may continue, and, following a benediction, they respond as have countless congregations since with "Amen" and "Hallelujah."

Thus, at the heart of the Chronicler's sixteenth chapter, as David completes the important task of centralizing the ark, the symbol of the Lord's presence, in Jerusalem, the narrator pauses to remind his readers of the centrality of worship. The Chronicler's hymn, these songs in a new key, provide a model of worship in which proclamation leads to prayer and culminates in praise. It is one for which we can all "Give thanks to the Lord!"