THE SACRIFICES OF GOD:
THE BROKEN HEART IN THE PSALMS

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ABSTRACT

The term "broken heart" appears seven times in the Old Testament. It is notable that four of the seven occurrences are in the Psalms. The phrase is included in three Davidic psalms (34, 51, 69) and one untitled psalm (147). Each of these psalms expresses the broken heart in a slightly different way.

This paper will demonstrate that the broken heart is a specialized term embedded in the Psalms' narrative of repentance and forgiveness. In order to elucidate this phrase, this paper will first examine the concept of the Hebrew word לֵב ("heart"). It will note correlations as well as divergences from the English concept of "heart." It will do this by exploring the key aspects of the לֵב—that is, the physical heart, as well as concepts of the intellect, emotion, and will. While doing so, this paper will especially examine the usage of לֵב in the Hebrew book of Psalms.

The latter portion of this paper will then examine the psalms which express the idiom "brokenhearted." In order to fill in the gaps and provide a clearer picture of the penitent sinner's thoughts, feelings, and motives, this paper will also examine additional penitential psalms where there are significant similarities.

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INTRODUCTION

The word "brokenhearted" is a metaphor which has become well established in the modern culture of the English language. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines it as "overcome by grief or despair," or more specifically, "filled with great sadness especially because someone you love has left you, has died, etc."[1] During its history in the English language, the *broken heart* has enjoyed its use among author and poet alike. With this metaphor William Shakespeare killed Enobarbus in his play *Antony and Cleopatra:* "throw my heart //Against the flint and hardness of my fault: // Which, being dried with grief, // will break to powder, // And finish all foul thoughts."[2] The phrase was adopted by 17th century playwright John Ford to title his drama, *The Broken Heart*. Emily Dickinson expressed the thought in a poem on love: "Proud of my broken heart, since thou did'st break it…"[3] So prolific is this metaphor that it is often expressed symbolically, even having recently been adapted as an official emoji.[4] Yet the broken heart is not merely a product of the English language. Long before the great poets Dickinson or Shakespeare, the concept of the broken heart was expressed by the ancient psalm writers of the Old Testament.

Of the seven times that the broken heart is used in the Old Testament literature, its most prevalent use is in the Psalms. Variants of the phrase are expressed in the Psalms four times (Ps 34, 51, 69, 147) and each is used in a context of repentance. The focus of this paper will be on examining the use of the broken heart in contexts of contrition in the Psalms.

It is important to note that this metaphor is vastly different from its usage in the English language. Where the English language uses this mostly in the context of eliminate romantic relationships, the Old Testament usage is more equivalent to the broader usage of grief and despair. Yet there is more to this word in the wider narrative of the Psalms.

This paper will demonstrate that the broken heart is embedded in the Psalms' narrative of repentance and forgiveness. First, it will look at usages of the Hebrew word for "heart" (לֵב). It will compare the English definition with the Hebrew and note overlap as well as divergence.

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[1] "Brokenhearted. " Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus. Accessed November 09, 2016. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brokenhearted

[2] William Shakespeare and Peter G. Phialas, *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 99.

[3] Emily Dickinson and Emma Hartnoll. *The Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson*, (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1994), 62.

[4] "Miscellaneous Symbols and Pictographs" Accessed December 02, 2016. The Unicode Consortium. http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U1F300.pdf

Then this paper will examine the four psalms that use the broken heart (Psalm 34, 51, 69, and 147). It will then look through parts of these psalms in turn to establish different aspects of the broken heart. Each portion will be examined in comparison to other psalms.

PART 1. UNDERSTANDING THE HEBREW HEART (לֵבָב/לֵב)

A proper understanding of the Hebrew heart is useful for determining the meaning of the "broken heart" in the context of the Psalms. In order to remove any presuppositions one might impose on the Hebrew word לֵב, it is beneficial to consult an English definition of the word "heart" as a basis of comparison. Consulting an English dictionary will be useful for determining where there is correlation and divergence between both terms. The remainder of this section will examine the lexical definitions of לֵב and analyze its usage within the Psalms.

The Heart in Modern English

The word *heart* is a very rich term in the English language. It is not often found in a dictionary with less than a few entries. For the purposes of this topic, this essay shall utilize the American Heritage Dictionary (AHD)[5] to define the word *heart* (*see* Appendix A *for a full list of entries*).

The first definition of the word *heart* conveys its most common understanding:

> **a.** The chambered muscular organ in vertebrates that pumps blood received from the veins into the arteries, thereby maintaining the flow of blood through the entire circulatory system.
> **b.** A similarly functioning structure in invertebrates. (A.1)

One can note that this entry is helpful for understanding the basic concept of heart. Sub-entry *a* presents a very scientific definition of the word heart. This entry would be useful for someone wishing to understand how the heart works. Hence, the common understanding is as follows: *a heart is one of many organs of the body. The function and purpose of this organ is to spread blood throughout the system*. This process provides circulation throughout the body and is necessary for life. Sub-entry *b* shows that there is a similar organ in other creatures as well. Although it does not strictly fit the scientific definition, this organ inside these animals can be considered a heart.

[5] "Heart." American Heritage Dictionary. Accessed December 06, 2016. https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=heart.

A look at the second dictionary definition reveals a much less technical understanding of the heart. The entry reads, “The area that is the approximate location of the heart in the body; the breast” (A.2). Here, the heart is described in much less scientific terms, but rather, it refers to a general region of the body. This definition has much less to do with the function or purpose of an organ which pumps blood. Yet although the definition would not serve the purpose of someone wishing to have a scientific concept of the heart, the entry is no less “correct” nor any less a proper use of the word “heart.”

The third definition of “heart” in AHD appears absent of any scientific terms to describe the heart. Instead, it refers to the heart as the “the vital center and source of one's being, emotions, and sensibilities.” (A.3.a). This heart is not referred to as an organ or even necessarily part of a physical body. Instead, the term is reduced to a metaphorical concept. The heart can be viewed as a “repository of one's deepest and sincerest feelings and beliefs” (A.3.b) or also “the seat of the intellect or imagination” (A.3.c). Such a heart can’t be located, dissected, or anatomically diagrammed, yet it is still a heart. Rather, it is a conceptual *heart* which can be expressed in poetry, discussed in philosophy, or in conversation to relate feelings. This type of *heart* has a role in the concepts of emotion, intellect, and will. This definition is important for noticing several similarities with the Hebrew heart which will be explained later on.

Later entries of the word *heart* also expand on similar conceptual definitions. The *heart* can describe innate attitudinal qualities: “emotional constitution” (A.4.a), “capacity for sympathy or generosity” (A.5.a), “courage; resolution; fortitude” (A.6.a), and so on. It is clear the definition has departed from a scientific term denoting a human organ. Now the definition is purely conceptual. There are no visible, auditory, or tactile facets to this sort of *heart*.

Further entries define the heart as “The central or innermost physical part of a place or region” (A.8.a) or “the most important or essential part” (A.9). These definitions neither imply a scientific nor a philosophical understanding of the *heart* but, rather, they exist as pure metaphors. These definitions will not be of considerable importance for this discussion on the Psalms.

The remaining definitions of the word *heart* in AHD appear only to be specialized uses. The word *heart* can refer to anything that represents the heart (A.10); the word *heart* can also be considered a card suit within the context of g*ames,* (A.11). Below the list of entries are idiomatic uses of the *heart* where meaning is determined by the context. Although there is some overlap

with the definitions above, what is understood by the word *heart* greatly relies on what is embedded in the English language and culture.

An analysis of the word *heart* in English certainly illustrates that it is a multifaceted word. Though one might tend to think of the *heart* as a single concept, it is in fact a word that is rich in definition. This single word can bring to mind a physical organ which pumps blood or the center of vitality in a human being; it can mean attitudes of courage and resilience, the center of self, or feelings toward another person; it can even—in the context—refer to the base stem of an artichoke. There are, in fact, many concepts found in the word *heart*.

For as many dictionary definitions as can be given for the word *heart* in English, so also can the word for *heart* in Hebrew be said to have a wealth of definitions. Close examination of the word will reveal overlap as well as divergence. It will be beneficial to know the similarities and distinctions in order to have a concept of this word and what it means in the phrase *a broken heart*.

The Heart in Hebrew

The Hebrew language has two words that express the concept of the *heart*: לֵב and לֵבָב. According to Heinz-Josef Fabry in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT), the words are used a total of 853 times—597 for לֵב and 256 for לֵבָב.[6] Since these words have similar usages and are considered identical by most lexicons, this paper will refer to all instances using the word לֵב (unless specifically noted).

In the Hebrew language, the word לֵב is used much more as a conceptual metaphor than as a physical term. An outline of the definition for לֵב in the Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB) shows that there is no *strict* entry for a physical heart but, rather, the לֵב is generally defined as the "inner man, mind, soul, heart" (*see* Appendix B). One might note that several of the entries appear to overlap definitions found in the English definition of heart (e.g. "10. *seat of courage*"). However, one may also consider that there are additional entries which are not generally associated with the English word *heart*. Thus, further examination is required to distinguish what constituted the Hebrew לֵב.

[6] Heinz-Josef Fabry, "leb," in *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Vol. 7, 399-437. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 407.

Although BDB provides a good overview of the word לֵב, the research is somewhat dated and its amount of entries is exorbitant. On the other hand, David Clines' *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* nicely divides the Hebrew heart into four major definitions: the first three definitions describe the conceptual *heart*—the mind, the feelings, and the will; the fourth definition describes the physical nature.[7] Clines' divisions will serve as the basis for this section.

The physical לֵב

It has already been established that the modern common definition of the word *heart* in English is a "chambered muscular organ that pumps blood to maintain the flow of blood." (A.1.a). However, imposing such a definition on the Hebrew לֵב would disregard millennia of changes in medical research as well as understanding in science and anatomy. A proper understanding of the physical לֵב requires setting aside preconceived notions of *the heart*.

First it is necessary to look within the time that Old Testament literature was composed. Fabry refers to nearby cultures in the ancient Near East. For instance, Egyptian medicine believed that breath flowed to the heart and other vessels which *speak* or, Fabry conjectures, "pump."[8] Also, the Mesopotamian *libbu* was a term which likely denoted the lower half of the torso whose beating was a sign of life and, conversely, its stoppage a sign of death.[9] However, it is not enough to look to contemporary conceptions of the heart to discern the meaning of לֵב. Evidence must come from Scripture itself.

Although the Psalms do not speak often of the physical heart, the Hebrew Bible does speak of heart in terms which indicate the general chest area. In 2 Samuel, Joab thrust three javelins "into the heart" (בְּלֵב) of Absalom, yet he was still alive until Joab's armor-bearers "struck and killed him" (2Sa 18:14). This verse is hard to understand if לֵב is strictly equivalent to the physiological heart. Also, other passages speak of the heart being "pierced" in much the same way (2Ki 9:24, Ps 37:14, Ps 45:6).

Marjorie Boyle, author of the article "Broken Hearts: The Violation of Biblical Law," argues against an anatomical or physiological understanding of the *heart* in Old Testament

[7] David J.A. Clines, eds. "leb," in *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Vol. IV, 497-504. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 497-498.
[8] Fabry, 401.
[9] Ibid., 403.

Scriptures.[10] Through her article, she promotes the idea that writers of the Old Testament would have no understanding of the heart as an organ in the slightest sense. Instead, she contends the Hebrew *heart* was a conceptual term denoting a *bone* or *limb*—notably, the *foot*.[11] Her argument is partially based on the parallelism in Isaiah 1:5-6, "The whole head is sick, // and the whole heart faint. // From the sole of the foot even to the head, // there is no soundness in it, // but bruises and sores // and raw wounds" (ESV). Indeed, one can note the parallels with the "head" and the "foot." She also argues, "The agency of this walking [in the law] is the heart embodied as legs."[12] Much of her argumentation focuses on phrases such as found in Leviticus 26:3, "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them…" (ESV).[13]

Boyle's arguments do perhaps sound compelling, but there are a few reasons to disagree with them. Firstly, although the heart can refer to "the chest region," it is not completely absent of a narrower sense in regard to physiology. Some passages in the Bible refer to the heart in a way that uses the לֵב in a much narrower sense. One such example comes from King David in the Psalms when he speaks about his pain before God: "My heart palpitates." (Ps 38:11). The Hebrew word in use for this passage is סְחַרחַר, which is considered an irregular form (*pealal*). Gesenius remarks this unusual form is "used of movements repeated in quick succession."[14] A similar thought appears in the book of Job, "At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place." (Job 37:1 ESV). There are also other instances of the heart "pounding" (Jer 4:19; perhaps Na 2:8). Indeed, ancient Israelites often referred to the לֵב as the general chest area; however, they also understood that the *heart* would "beat" in times of stress or danger.

Another aspect to consider concerning the ancient Hebrew physical understanding of the heart is also understanding the Hebrew culture of worship. In her book *Anatomical Idiom and Emotional Expression*, author Angela Thomas says that ancient Israelites actually did have a firm grasp of the physical לֵב.

> It is sometimes suggested that the location of the heart may not have been fully understood and that the ancients may not have associated this organ with the pumping of blood around the body. However, as a sacrifice of animals was a daily act of worship, it is likely that priests, at least, had a good idea of anatomy and that, as the life force was

[10] Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "Broken hearts: the violation of biblical law," *Journal of The American Academy Of Religion* 73, no. 3 (September 2005), 733.
[11] Ibid., 735.
[12] Ibid, 737.
[13] Ibid, 736.
[14] Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and E. C. Mitchell. (Andover: W.F. Draper, 1880), §55e.

> considered to be in the blood, which must be allowed to flow out of the animal for the meat to be edible, the function of the beating of the heart was understood.[15]

Sacrifice was undoubtedly a regular occurrence of the Jewish community. Numbers 28 gives evidence of how the idea of sacrifice was embedded in the Israelites' daily life. Another thing to note is that there were also many dietary restrictions on the eating of animals that would require knowledge of their anatomy (cf. Dt 12:23–24). It is not a stretch to assume that the Israelites would have a fair understanding of the heart in its physical form and anatomical function. Therefore, to assume that the לֵב *must* not refer to heart is an ignorant assessment.

Although most people today have a radically different understanding of the anatomical *heart* compared to the ancient Israelite, it is important to note that those who wrote the Psalms at least understood the heart at a basic level. Perhaps to some extent there might be correlation to expressions that are found in modern thought today. Thomas does concede that "whether customary association of the heart with the emotions had anything to do with the general chest area is impossible to prove."[16] However, noting that the ancient Israelites had a fundamental understanding of the heart shows some degree of coherence with modern society.

The intellect of the לֵב

As noted earlier, one can see from lexicons such as BDB that ancient Israel did not see the heart primarily as a physical organ. Much more often, the heart is spoken of conceptually. The following entries in this section show that the heart was much more than a muscle in the body to the psalmists—it was the object through which feelings, desires, and thoughts flowed.

The first and most prevalent use of לֵב expresses the *intellect*. In other words, the לֵב is often used as a way to express thoughts or cognition. It is important here to remark on this distinction between English and Hebrew. In AHD, the conceptual heart in English is used primarily to describe affections—"emotion," "sympathy," "courage." (cf. A.3-6). However, the word לֵב is not considered the primary conceptual metaphor for emotions. In *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, Hans Wolff describes what he calls the *reasoning* concept of the heart: "Here the word [לֵב] is clearly distinguished from [נֶפֶשׁ] and [רוּחַ]."[17] Both נֶפֶשׁ and רוּחַ are used throughout the Hebrew Bible to describe emotion more often than the word לֵב. BDB defines נֶפֶשׁ as "the seat

[15]Angela Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom and Emotional Expression: A Comparison of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 109.
[16] Thomas, 109.
[17] Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 46-47.

of emotion," for which it provides 151 examples.[18] It also describes רוּחַ in similar terms.[19] Gladness (84:4), joy (35:9), and hatred (11:4) are ascribed as feelings of the נֶפֶשׁ.

However, the distinction between the לֵב and the רוּחַ is not always evident. There are several times where the Psalms equate both of these terms (cf. Ps 34:18; 51:10,17; 77:6; 78:8; 143:4). Indeed, there are other passages in the Old Testament which also equate רוּחַ and נֶפֶשׁ (cf. Job 7:11; 12:10; Isa 26:9). It is perhaps best to assume that, just as in English, there is an overlap of metaphorical concepts.

Most psalms describe the heart acting like a "mind." David writes in Psalm 140, "preserve me from violent men, who plan [חשׁב] evil things in their heart" (Ps 140:1-2 ESV). Other psalms speak of the wicked "speaking" in the recesses of their heart. David also writes, "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God" (Ps 14:1 ESV; cf. 53:2). There are many examples of the heart acting as a mind in a cognitive sense (10:6,11,13; 35:25; 74:8). Occasionally this action of "speaking" in the heart is summarized as meditation, "the meditation of my heart shall be understanding" (Ps 49:4 ESV; cf. 19:15).

A key part to the heart as a *mind* is also *attention*. Fabry elaborates, "Initially, cognition in the [לֵב] is related to sense perception: it is prior to seeing with the eyes and hearing with the ears, because it initiates the operation of the senses […] Then it comes to mean preservation and internalization […] for the purpose of making judgments and decisions."[20] The heart was a conceptual metaphor of active attentiveness. The word is often combined with the word שׂית to describe *directing* the heart to actively dwell on something. "Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them" (Psalm 62:11 ESV; cf. 48:14). The heart not only mulls over matters—it latches onto visible, tangible things in the outside world.

Even though the Hebrew heart can direct its attention outside, its activity is internal. The לֵב flows with thoughts. It is the shell which contains hidden ideas that can only be observed by God. In this way, the Hebrew heart is different from the English equivalent (at least as far as emphasis)—the heart can *reason, plan, consider*. These characteristics appear foreign to the modern reader who would consider these characteristics inherent to the brain. Most science

[18] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.), 659.
[19] Brown, 924.
[20] Fabry, 419.

textbooks would describe how thoughts are inherently synapses firing in the human cerebrum. But the language utilized by the Old Testament does not necessarily undermine the inerrancy of Scripture. The Psalms—as well as the entire Old Testament—have figures of speech. Commenting on the Psalms, Professor Emeritus Daniel Deutschlander writes,

> It is the very nature of poetry that it is to be understood in a figurative rather than a literal sense. […] We are not forcing a meaning on a text, nor are we subtracting anything from it; rather, we search the Scriptures for a clear understanding of the imagery in its poems and a clear understanding in its proverbial expressions. […] We take the Scriptures on their own terms and within their own frames of reference.[21]

Although the Psalms and much of Scripture use poetry and other figures of speech, God's Word is still truth. God used the language of the inspired psalm writers to proclaim truth. God's Word itself says that "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pe 1:21 ESV). The Scriptures are a Word that speaks to all generations in a universal voice, but with a single message.

The emotions of the לֵב

The Hebrew לֵב is most commonly used with thoughts. Yet even though this is not its most prevalent usage, the Hebrew *heart* should not be considered completely devoid of emotion. Here it is important to distinguish לֵב from a word that is often translated as heart—that is, the כְּלָיוֹת, which literally means "kidneys." The word כְּלָיוֹת is scarcely found in the Psalms with only five occurrences (Ps 7:9. 16:7, 26:2. 73:21. 139:13). Job says his kidneys are enthralled to see God in the flesh which the NIV translates: "How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:27 NIV). Unlike the English language, the Hebrew *heart* was not the primary "conceptual organ" of emotion in the Hebrew mind.

However, there are still occasions in the Hebrew Bible when it is used to describe emotion. Many of the Psalms expresses the joy that the לֵב can have: "Your statutes [God] are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart" (Ps 119:111; cf. also Ps 4:8, 16:9, 19:9, 33:21), "gladdening" (Ps 104:14), or "rejoicing" of the heart (Ps 13:6). One can see that, just as in English, the Hebrew *heart* can experience joy.

The Hebrew *heart* can also feel fear and sorrow as well. The Psalms speak of anguish in the heart which accompanies a sense of distress: "My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of

[21] Daniel M. Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds: The Splendor of Christian Doctrine*, (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 75.

death have fallen on me" (Ps 38:9 NIV; cf. 13:3, 55:4). The Psalms also express how "abandonment" (עֲזָבָנִי) of the לֵב can happen out of fear (cf. Ps 38:10, 40:12). Psalm 119 expresses also a different kind of fear: "Rulers persecute me without cause, but my heart trembles at your word" (v. 161 NIV). In this verse, the heart trembles out of fear for God's Word rather than because of the powerful princes (שָׂרִים) of mankind.

In TDOT, Fabry remarks on an inward descent of the Hebrew לֵב when one is afraid. [22] Elements of Fabry's progression can be observed in the Psalms as well: the לֵב "trembles" (Ps 55:5), it "faints" (Ps 61:3), "stiffens" (Ps 143:4), "breaks," and then "finally fails" (Ps 69:21). While the Psalms do talk about varying degrees, neither the Psalms nor the Old Testament explicitly gives any sort of ordered list to this progression of "descent."

Converse to fear and despair, the heart can also be courageous. Psalm 32 ends, "Be strong [חִזְקוּ] and take heart [וְיַאֲמֵץ לְבַבְכֶם], all you who hope in the LORD" (v. 24 NIV; cf. Ps 27:14). The word חִזְקוּ means "grow strong"[23] and the *hifil* form יַאֲמֵץ means "take strength."[24] As in English, courage in the heart is associated with physical strength. This is in contrast to the weakness ("trembling and "fainting") of the heart for fear.

The Old Testament also ascribes antagonistic passion to the לֵב. In the Psalms there is one example: "My heart grew hot [חַם] within me" (Ps 39:3[4] NIV).[25] The psalmist is described as being "muzzled" (39:1[2]). With the inability to express himself, his heart becomes heated. This appears to be descriptive of the intense emotion, perhaps, *zeal* that the psalmist has. There is a fire burning (תִּבְעַר־אֵשׁ) while he meditates, and then he lets loose his tongue (Ps 39:3[4]). Another example outside the Psalms also speaks of this passion. Deuteronomy mentions the "avenger of blood" whose heart "becomes heated" (כִּי־יֵחַם לְבָבוֹ) when he overtakes an accused murderer, thus killing him (Dt 19:6). The deep-seated passions of the heart are manifested to the extreme.

Although the Hebrew לֵב is not considered the primary conceptual metaphor for emotion, one can observe instances in the Psalms where it does contain elements of joy, fear, despair, and anger. The heart is not only a "thinking" organ—it is also a "feeling" organ. These topics are important for discussing topics such as the *guilt* and *fear* of the brokenhearted in the Psalms.

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[22] Fabry, 415-416.
[23] Brown, 304
[24] Brown, 54.
[25] Note: All passages with verse numbers in brackets indicate a discrepancy between the English and Hebrew verse numbering. The Hebrew verse numbers are listed in the brackets.

The will of the לֵב

Not all of the Hebrew *heart* is internalized in thoughts or feelings—the לֵב also exercises a will. Determining when the לֵב is acting as the will can be somewhat difficult. Fabry writes, "The line between the rational function of the [לֵב] and the activity of the will is blurred, because it is impossible pragmatically to distinguish between the theory and praxis."[26] In other words, it is not always clear whether thoughts are to remain thoughts or whether they are to be acted upon.

There are different types of לֵב in regard to volition. Much of the Psalms describe the straight heart (יָשָׁר) constituting the moral disposition of a person. The idea of a straight לֵב is often paralleled with righteousness: "Light shines on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart" (Ps 97:11 NIV; cf. 32:11, 36:11, 64:11, 94:15, also 125:4). In a similar regard, other passages also speak of a pure heart as well (cf. Ps 51:10, 119:80). Converse to a "straight" or "pure" heart is a heart that is "crooked": "The perverse [עִקֵּשׁ] of heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with what is evil" (Ps 101:4 NIV).

Despite the different types of hearts, the לֵב is not static—it can turn. Thus one psalmist prays, "Our hearts had not turned back" (Ps 44:18[19]). On the other hand, the heart can remain steady and not turn. Psalm 112 speaks in this regard when it writes, "their hearts are steadfast [נָכוֹן], trusting in the Lord. Their hearts are secure [סָמוּךְ], they will have no fear" (v. 7-8 NIV). The term "established" (כון) also describes a heart that does not turn (cf. Ps 57:8, 78:8, 78:37, 108:2).[27] In a similar way, one can also make their לֵב to be stubborn, although this is only mentioned once in the Psalms: "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness" (95:8 NIV; cf. Pr 28:14).

The Hebrew *heart* is capable of having desires. In Psalm 37, David writes that God will "give you the desires of your heart" (v. 4 NIV; cf. Ps 20:5, 21:3). The desires in most passages of the Psalms are taken in a positive sense. David also adds that "the law of their God is in their hearts" (v. 32 NIV; cf. 119:112). It is also important to note the common expression for desire to follow God; that is, the term "whole hearted" (כֹּל־לֵב). This expression is often used in the Psalms with giving thanks (cf. Ps 9:2, 86:12, 111:1, 138:1). Psalm 119 also combines the phrase with

[26] Fabry, 423.
[27] An established heart could also be dealing with the emotional aspect of the לֵב as well. Psalm 10:17 mentions the LORD "establishes the hearts" of the afflicted. Psalm 112:17 also says that those who trust in the LORD have "established hearts" and do not fear bad news.

other expressions: “seeking” (v. 2, v. 10), “observing laws” (v. 34, v. 69), and “entreating” or “calling” (v. 58,v. 145).

The Old Testament often portrays the motivations of the לֵב as concealed. Such a distinction is made when the prophet Samuel was looking for an anointed king, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. […] People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1Sa 16:7 ESV). Wolff says that “The heart is […] contrasted with the outward appearance. Although it is concealed from man, it is here that the vital decisions are made.”[28] The Psalms often describe the heart this way. It is described as an object which a person can open: “I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help” (Ps 40:11 NIV; cf. 119:11). In contrast to an open heart, the heart can have duplicitous motivations: “Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and double hearts [בְּלֵב וָלֵב] they speak” (Ps 12:2[3] ESV). Such a person is described as having “a heart and a heart.”

Yet although the לֵב is impenetrable to man, the Psalms do ascribe God the ability to examine the לֵב. God is indeed able to examine both the mind (לֵב) and the emotions (כְּלָיוֹת) as in Psalm 7, “you [are] the righteous God who probes minds [לֵב] and hearts [כְּלָיוֹת]” (Ps 7:11[10] NIV). The word used here for God’s insight [בָּחַן] is defined by BDB as “examine, try.”[29] In other passages, the psalmist invites God to test his heart, “Examine my heart and my mind” (Ps 26:2 NIV; cf. Ps 17:3). However, God does not even need to “test” the heart, as the psalmist inquires: “Would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart?” (Ps 44:21[22] NIV). Also, it is God “who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do” (Ps 33:15 NIV).

Not only does God have the ability to examine but he can also interact with the hearts of humankind. He can affect the hearts of others like they can themselves. He can choose to turn the לֵב: “Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain” (Ps 119:36 NIV). God can also choose to make the לֵב stubborn: “But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices” (Ps 81:11-12[12-13] NIV). God can also effect positive change in the heart: “Create [בָּרָא] in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps 51:10[11] NIV).

[28] Wolff, 43.
[29] Brown, 103.

The will of the Hebrew *heart* shows that it is not just a reservoir of feelings or a space for thought—it is a way in which the person expresses himself toward the world. The heart can be "duplicitous," it can have "desires," it can be "crooked" or "straight." These are key themes in the psalmist's words of penitence and important for understanding how a sinner inclines toward a broken heart.

PART 2. THE BROKEN HEART IN THE PSALMS

The term "broken heart" is used four times in the book of Psalms. These are: Psalm 34, 51, 69, 147. Each of these psalms provides a different emphasis of the broken heart in the sinner's walk through repentance. This second portion of the paper will examine the broken heart in light of the way the term is embedded in these contexts.

However, this paper will not limit itself exclusively to these "brokenhearted psalms." They are part of a larger anthology that is *The Book of Psalms*. Much of the same concepts and themes (most notably, the writings of King David) are parallel across these different works. In order to fill in the gaps and provide a clearer picture of the repenting sinner's thoughts, feelings, and motives, this paper will incorporate what other psalmists have written into the penitential narrative of these "brokenhearted psalms." The goal is to illustrate the term "brokenhearted" in the framework of these spiritually-inspired compositions by examining how these psalmists express the intellect, the emotion, and the will using the Hebrew word לֵב.

Psalm 51:17-18 – The Heart of the Penitent Sinner

Psalm 51 presents one of the best overall pictures of the broken heart in the Psalms. Written by David, this psalm expresses the confession of guilt from his sin against Bathsheba recorded in 2 Samuel 12. Dr. George Stoeckhardt says,

> In this Psalm we find the sentiments expressed which are hidden in the heart of a penitent sinner. All through his later life David was moved by such thoughts, and in this Psalm he presents them in such beautiful fashion that people to [*sic*] all generations know how deeply he regretted his fall and yet how fully he trusted in God's forgiving mercy.[30]

Through this psalm one can see the different aspects of the penitential narrative. This psalm will serve as the general outline for the second portion of this paper.

[30] George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Select* Psalms, (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic Publishng Co., Inc., 1965),120.

Psalm 51 has a unique position in the book of Psalms. In his commentary on the Psalms, John Brug describes it as the "bridge" between two different types of psalms. Whereas the previous psalms discuss sacrifice and payment for sin, the ones that follow describe events in the life of David; this Psalm contains elements of both.[31] One can note the verse which bridges both portions together: "You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings" (Ps 51:16 NIV). This thought precedes the key verse in Psalm 51. The next verse forms the context for the rest of David's narrative throughout this psalm. He writes,

> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
> a broken and crushed heart,
> O God, you will not despise. (Ps 51:17)[32]

In this "bridge" between psalms, the inspired psalmist David uses the term "broken heart." The occurrence of the term here is especially significant for the focus of this paper. However, in order to get a sense of its meaning of the phrase, it is necessary to look at what the psalmist means by the term "broken."

The word for this "brokenness" is the Hebrew word שׁבר. BDB defines שׁבר as "break (in pieces)."[33] This definition provides modern English sense to the word; however, it does not specify what it *means* when something is broken (e.g "Can it still be functional?") or, indeed, what *can* be broken. It is necessary, therefore, to consult the usages of the word in order to determine what it does and does not mean. In TDOT, B. Knipping suggests several types of objects that can be broken:

> part of the human body or of animal bodies (32 times; esp. the arms, bones, teeth, and, in a metaphorical sense, the heart); domestic animals are "broken" 5 times, trees (cedars or boughs, branches) 6 times, and people or groups of people (nations, Israelites) 25 times. In 23 instances objects of religious significance such as cultic objects […], in 24 instances war materiel (esp. bows, armies, as well as gates [both city and house] and bolts, which in the strict sense represent defensive or protective materials), and in 7 instances dishes. Yokes, a symbol of oppression, are broken in 16 instances. The expression "break the staff of bread" occurs 5 times.[34]

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[31] John F. Brug, *Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House, 2002), 501.

[32] *Personal translation*. Note: The unpointed text of this verse begins זבחי אלהים. The first word is pointed in the BHS as זְבְחֵי which would render "the sacrifices of God." However, the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia suggests that the pointing might have been זִבְחִי. However, it provides no evidence. With BHS, the sentence would thus be rendered "My sacrifices, O God…" The translation noted above is preferred not only because it is substantiated by the Masoretic pointing, but also because it is the harder read and (as noted later on in this paper) fits better with the parallelism of the verse.

[33] Brown, 990.

[34] TDOT-K, 369.

Indeed, the לֵב is one of many objects that can be broken, albeit metaphorically. Knipping notes that the main usage of this term refers to "concrete acts" of breaking.[35] In this regard, the word is on the whole quite similar to the modern English definition of "break."

Yet שׁבר has a certain peculiarity in the Psalms; that is, whenever it refers to "breaking," God is the subject. He breaks the wicked (3:7, 10:15, 37:17), vegetation (29:5, 105:16, 105:33,), manmade crafts (46:9, 48:7, 76:3, 107:16, perhaps 37:15), and beasts (74:13). Indeed, it should be unsurprising that God is the catalyst of the "broken heart." One exception to this is in Psalm 69, which will be discussed in a later section of this paper.[36]

In addition to a definition and usage of the words שׁבר and לב, it is also important to observe the term "broken heart" in the context of this verse's parallelism. The "broken spirit" (רוּחַ נִשְׁבָּרָה) is equivalent to the "broken and crushed heart" (לֵב־נִשְׁבָּר וְנִדְכֶּה). Modern translations have often rendered the latter phrase "a broken and contrite heart" (cf. NIV, ESV, NASB, KJV). The LXX renders it καρδίαν συντετριμμένην καὶ τεταπεινωμένην ("a shattered and humbled heart"). Therefore both modern and ancient translations see the aspect of contrition in the second word נִדְכֶּה. Since the words דכא and שׁבר are similar in meaning, parallelism would suggest that the broken heart is equivalent the "crushed" or "contrite" heart.

It is on this point that Marjorie Boyle disagrees. She contends that both phrases are in fact "sequential, not synonymous."[37] In other words, a person is "broken" before they are contrite. Her view stems from her opinion that "hearts are embodied not as the cardiac organ but as bones, the limbs. [Thus] Broken hearts are embodied as crippled legs, because the function of both legs and heart is to walk."[38] In other words, the Hebrew heart is not "broken" by being contrite, but rather it ceases to function properly in the metaphorical sense of "moral" walking. Furthermore, she contends, "This brokenness is not a paralysis that renders hearts/legs inactive. It is, rather, an image of deformity and disability that inclines them in a perverse direction."[39] Simply stated, Boyle argues that "brokenness" in the heart is a general inclination toward evil. Boyle argues why such a heart is not despised: "Its breakage precedes contrition because it is

[35] TDOT-K, 378.
[36] Note: There is also another exception in Ps 104:11 – יִשְׁבְּרוּ פְרָאִים צְמָאָם (lit. "The donkeys broke their thirst"). However, this appears to be a Hebrew idiom similar to the English expression "to break one's fast" and thus not general sense of the word שׁבר.
[37] Boyle, 747.
[38] Boyle, 735.
[39] Boyle, 737.

breakage of the law, which necessarily occurs before its repentance."[40] In other words, she argues that God does not despise a transgressor because such breakage leads to repentance.

Aside from the evidence in parallelism, Psalm 51 shows that a broken heart is more than a general inclination to evil. David recounts the depths of his despair, his sorrow over his sin, and his deep desire for cleanliness. This is not a heart that is out of tune—it is a heart that is so broken it is crushed. The inspired psalmists speak vividly of the way which sin, the law, and grace affect the sinner's לֵב. The following portion of the paper will examine how the broken heart is manifested by the psalmists in regard to the intellect, the emotion, and the will.

Psalm 51:1-6 (Ps 6, 32, 38) – A Sinner Drawn to Brokenness

The opening two lines of this psalm serve as a prelude for what is to follow (v. 1-2[3-4]). These verses serve to show what is in David's heart at the beginning of this psalm. David appeals to the mercy (חֶסֶד) and compassion (רַחֲמִים) of God. Here he asks God two things: that he deal with David "according to his mercy" (כְּחַסְדֶּךָ) and that he remove his sin (כַּבְּסֵנִי /מְחֵה פְשָׁעָי מֵחַטָּאתִי טַהֲרֵנִי/מֵעֲוֹנִי). These very first verses express the faith that David already has. Luther writes, "David is not speaking this way with the absolute God. He is speaking with the God of his fathers, with the God whose promises he knows and whose mercy and grace he has felt."[41] These first verses are a reminder of what exists in the לֵב (mind) of all the penitent—faith in their merciful God.

David then describes another important aspect to the heart of a penitent sinner. He writes, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me" (v. 3 NIV). Dr. H.C. Leupold writes on David's expression, "By stating it thus, the remark becomes the equivalent of: I know how grievously I have sinned, and the thought of it clings to me night and day."[42] One can note the concept of the mind is introduced in this passage. Surely the thought exists in David's לֵב.

David's words mark an important distinction between himself and others who are caught in their sin. Psalm 119 refers to a different type of heart which the "arrogant" possess. The psalmist writes, "Their hearts are callous and unfeeling" (v. 70 NIV). The term expressed in Hebrew (טָפַשׁ כַּחֵלֶב) literally translates "it is as fat as fat." Brug writes, "It refers to a callous,

[40] Ibid, 748.
[41] Martin Luther, *First Lectures on the Psalms: Psalms 1-75*, ed. by Hilton C. Oswald. Vol. 10 (Luther's Works. St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1974), 312-313.
[42] H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augusburg, 1959), 402.

unfeeling attitude and perhaps also to stupidity. The ungodly do not care that their wickedness harms other people and offends God."[43] There is no effect on the mind or the emotions of this person. In contrast to what David writes in Psalm 51, this is a person whose לֵב is stubborn and unmoved.

The knowledge that David had was distinct from one who was uncaring. By acknowledging his sin was "before him" (נֶגְדִּי), David felt confronted by this sin. A few psalms describe this wrestling that a sinner has. Some have speculated that David's feelings in Psalm 32 are parallel emotions to the same experience prefaced in Psalm 51.[44] The prelude to 32 is similar: "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven" (v. 1 NIV). Here, too, David describes a need for forgiveness. However, the opening two verses (v. 1-2) are in stark contrast to what follows,

> When I kept silent,
> my bones wasted away
> through my groaning all day long.
> For day and night
> your hand was heavy on me;
> my strength was sapped
> as in the heat of summer. (Ps 32:3-4 NIV)

Here David expresses the agony over the sin for which he "kept silent." One can well note how the feelings of the heart are expressed in physical pain. The word used for bones (עֶצֶם) is defined "bone, substance, self."[45] A possible metaphorical understanding is that the very "substance" of David wastes away. Brug notes that this gives a picture of "total exhaustion" since the bones are the last part of the body to waste away.[46] David's reference to God's hand being "heavy" upon him implies that he feels the weight of his sin against God. It is apparent here that David's לֵב is being moved by God's judgment on him.

David also describes the pain of concealed sin in Psalm 38. The first eight verses express concepts similar to Psalm 32: "your hand has come down on me"; "no soundness in my bones" (v. 2; v. 3 NIV). The final verse in this section concludes, "I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart [לֵב]" (v. 8 NIV). The word David uses for "crushed" is דכא. It is also followed by the idiom עַד־מְאֹד (lit. "up to very much"). Both of these strong phrases express that

[43] John F. Brug, *Psalms: Psalms 73-150*, (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House, 2001), 353-354.
[44] Leupold, 401.
[45] Brown, 782.
[46] Brug, *Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, 351.

David's pain is extremely severe. The parallelism suggests that not only is David feeling "crushed," but this pain also extends to his heart as well. The very "inner man" of David is feeling the pressure of his sins. David is quite clear that this sin affects his very heart an agonizing way.

David knew and felt the burden of his sin. The knowledge of his transgression against God was not simply some dispassionate thought—it was surely a thought that plagued him. Luther writes on this verse,

> The knowledge of sin […] is not some sort of speculation or an idea which the mind thinks up for itself. It is a true feeling, a true experience, a very serious struggle of the heart, as he testifies when he says (v. 3), "I know (that is, I feel or experience) my transgressions." This is what the Hebrew word [יָדַע] really means. […] The knowledge of sin is itself the feeling of sin, and the sinful man is the one who is oppressed by his conscience and tossed to and fro, not knowing where to turn.[47]

When David "knew" his transgression, it affected his whole self. David's sins brought pain to his לֵב while they were still hidden.

In Psalm 51, David not only speaks of wrestling sin concealed within his לֵב but having that sin exposed before God. David shows that this sin is personal when he writes, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (v. 4 NIV). Such words harken back to David's confrontation with the prophet Nathan. David says, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2Sa 12:13 NIV). David's knowledge of his sin is also knowledge of himself. As a penitent sinner, his heart acknowledges his sinfulness before God.

In Psalm 51, David also freely admits the greater righteousness of God. "So you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge" (v. 4 NIV). The previous verse has given evidence that David had knowledge of his sin or, rather, his "rebellion" (פֶּשַׁע) against God.[48] The idea of a sinner before God is mentioned elsewhere in Psalms: "If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?" (130:3 NIV). In the New Testament, Paul speaks more clearly about this unrighteousness of mankind before God, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 2:23 NIV). David's heart not only knew his sin, but it was also well aware of the ultimate disparity between a righteous God and a mere, mortal sinner.

With knowledge of sin also comes terror. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the לֵב is concealed to others; however, it is open to God. Indeed, David writes that God "knows the

[47] Luther, 310. Bracketed word from original text.
[48] Leupold, 402.

secrets of the heart" (Ps 40:20 NIV). Although David only confesses the knowledge of his sin in Psalm 51, he talks of the terror of God's wrath elsewhere. In Psalm 6, David describes the anxious feelings of one who knows the full judgmental powers of a righteous God.

> LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger
> or discipline me in your wrath.
> Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint;
> heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.
> My soul is in deep anguish. (6:1-3 NIV)

Knowledge of sin and of a just God leads David to see God's wrath against sin. Some have argued that Psalm 6 is not explicitly penitential.[49] However, Leupold contends that the anger God shows in this psalm is manifested against the sinner's very being.[50] One can note the similarity in David's expression "I am faint" (אֻמְלַל) to when he writes elsewhere, "My heart is faint" (בַּעֲטַף לִבִּי; cf. Ps 61:2). Again, there is also a mention of his bones, referring to the very substance of David as a sinner. He also expresses "anguish of the soul" (נַפְשִׁי נִבְהֲלָה). The terrors of the wrath of God have certainly affected his whole being.

David had a thorough knowledge of sin—he knew his guilt, and God's wrath against him. In Psalm 51 David expresses his deep awareness of his own sin. He writes, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (v. 5 NIV). Some have interpreted David's words as an exaggeration of guilt for his act of sin.[51] Yet David's words are painstakingly clear. Brug puts this thought well when he writes, "David's sin was no fluke, no accident, no surprise. It was an expression of the corrupt nature which lurks within all of us."[52] The penitential sinner is well aware of his own sin. David's heart knew his sin was deep-seated. Luther writes, "This is the most difficult teaching of this psalm, yes, of all Scripture or theology; without it, it is impossible to understand Scripture correctly."[53]

The first verses of Psalm 51 express the penitent sinner's heart being "crushed" beneath God's law. Certainly as the psalm progresses, the further awareness of sin and feelings of guilt set in. Such is what causes the sinner to become brokenhearted. However, this is just one aspect

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[49] Rolf A. Jacobson, "Psalm 6: The Problem and the Solution" in *The Book of Psalms*, ed. by Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 101.
[50] Leupold, 84.
[51] Nancy deClaissé-Walford writes, "The psalmist is expressing in these words the all-pervasive quality of the guilt which accompanies the wrong-doing."
[52] Brug, *Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, 508.
[53] Luther, 351.

of the broken heart—indeed, an aspect that shows the cruelty of sin and the deep need for God's grace.

Psalm 51:6 and Psalm 34 (Ps 6) – The Wisdom of the Broken Heart

The sixth verse in Psalm 51 begins to describe the thoughts, feelings, and motives of the heart in a different aspect from the first five verses. However, translation of this verse is debated. The verse reads, "Thus you took pleasure [in] truth in the [טֻחוֹת – hidden place?] // and in the hidden place you made known wisdom" (Ps 51:6[8]). David mentions "inner parts" (טֻחוֹת) where man learns his wisdom. The NIV has interpreted this as "the womb," perhaps from the context of the previous verse (cf. v. 5[7]). However, the word טֻחוֹת is also used in Job to express where God sets wisdom (שָׂת בַּטֻּחוֹת חָכְמָה; cf. Job 38:36). Brug's commentary offers the best translation of this verse, "Surely you are pleased [with] truth in the inner parts, and in the hidden part you cause me to know wisdom."[54] Here, "putting in the inner parts" is paralleled with "causing me to know." It is evident that the inner parts (טֻחוֹת) refer to a place of knowledge where God puts truth (אֱמֶת) and wisdom (חָכְמָה). Brug offers the following paraphrase of the verse: "Without a doubt, what you want to find in a man is sincere repentance which confesses sin and which trusts the promise of forgiveness. You are the one who can produce such wisdom in the depths of my conscience."[55]

David is speaking about a different matter from the realization and terror of sin in the previous five verses. Here David is speaking of wisdom and truth being instilled in his heart by God. The book of Samuel mentions twice when David's heart had "struck him." This occurs once when David cut the robe from King Saul, whom "the LORD anointed" (1Sa 24:5-6 NIV). David is struck by his heart again when he took a census against God's will (2Sa 24:3; cf. 1Chr 21:1). Each of these verses express this thought with the words וַיַּךְ לִבּ־דָּוִד [אֹתוֹ\אֲלֵיו] ("and the heart of David struck him"). The NIV translates both verses as "conscience-stricken." The wisdom of David's heart was a conscience which revealed his sin against the Lord.

The wisdom in David's heart expresses more than realization of sin and terror of God's law. This wisdom is the theme of Psalm 34. The title reveals David's inspiration from the psalm came from his experience with Abimelech. The book of 1 Samuel describes this event during which David acted "insane" in order to flee from the King of Gath (cf. 1 Samuel 21). Despite the

[54] Brug, *Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, 509. Bracketed in original
[55] Brug, *Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, 509.

psalm's contextual allusion to David's frightening situation, the words are filled with joy and trust. David mentions God's redemption from distress (cf. v. 7) and writes, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" (Ps 34:8 NIV).

Later in Psalm 34, David shifts his thought from words of reassurance to words of wisdom. He writes, "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." (Ps 34:11 NIV). David here begins his words of instruction to teach the wisdom concerning "fear" of God. Those who desire life should not speak evil but do good and seek peace (cf. v. 12-14). The Lord hears the righteous, but he is against those who do evil (cf. v. 15-17). David then writes, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted [לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב] and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Ps 34:18 NIV).

One might wonder where a broken heart fits in with the theme of wisdom in this psalm. The rest of the language of the psalm speaks of peace and security with God as a refuge, but it does not speak to any feats of David himself. However, the wisdom in this verse is rather God's actions toward the psalmist. God is near (קָרוֹב) such a person and he brings that person salvation (יוֹשִׁיעַ). In other words—God blesses the weak. In Psalm 6 David not only describes the terror of God's judgment but he also describes this aspect of wisdom,

> My soul is in deep anguish.
> How long, LORD, how long?
> Turn, LORD, and deliver me;
> save me because of your unfailing love. […]
> I am worn out from my groaning.
> All night long I flood my bed with weeping
> and drench my couch with tears.
> My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
> they fail because of all my foes. (Ps 6:4-8 NIV)

In these verses, David expresses the thoughts that flow out of his anguish. His thoughts turn from his pain to expectation. He asks the question, "How long?" The question is left open, but the next verse explains what David is awaiting. There are three imperatives: "turn!" (שׁוּבָה), "deliver my soul!" (חַלְּצָה נַפְשִׁי), and "save me!" (הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי). David's word for deliverance (from the root חָלַץ) means "to draw out."[56] It is evident that David is awaiting deliverance and release from the anguish of his heart.

However, the penitent heart that looks for deliverance is still crying out in pain. David still writes, "I am worn out! … My eyes grow weak!" (Ps 6:7-8 NIV). As David awaits his

[56] Brown, 322.

deliverance, it takes out stress on his body. Yet the pain is also in the heart. In Psalm 13, David writes that he has "grief [יָגֹון] in his heart all day." (cf. Ps 13:1-2). He also expresses faintness in his wait for deliverance, "I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Ps 61:3 NIV). Other psalm writers refer to the pain of waiting for the Lord's deliverance as well. The "afflicted person" in Psalm 102 waits for the Lord to deliver him from distress. He makes a metaphorical comparison of his heart's pain, "My heart is blighted and withered like grass" (Ps 102:4 NIV).[57] The same thought of a deep-seated eagerness for the arrival of his hope, "I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning" (Ps 130:6 NIV).

David also expresses this "waiting for deliverance" with a sense of urgency. He writes, "Answer me quickly, LORD; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit" (Ps 143:7 NIV). David's language presents the picture of immediacy: "Hurry!" (מהר). The phrase "my spirit fails" (כָּלְתָה רוּחִי) connotes that cessation of his breath (i.e. "life") is at hand. Other psalms also mention the heart "ceasing" (כלה) in expectation of the Lord (cf. Ps 84:2; also perhaps 73:26). This cessation appears to ultimately lead to "the pit" (בור).

The language of David's language for redemption is strong. His words are filled with pain, urgency, all bent on an expectation—this is the wisdom of the broken heart. David's plea for help draws to a close at the end of Psalm 38. He writes, "For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess [אַגִּיד; lit. "I speak!"] my iniquity; I am troubled [אֶדְאַג] by my sin" (Ps v. 17-18 NIV). David sees his fall, but that leads to his next expression, "I confess!" It is the anguish (דאג) in his heart over sin—and the hope of what answer the Lord may bring—which draws out his speech. The psalm ends, "LORD, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior" (Ps 38:21-22 NIV).

In these verses lies the true wisdom of the "broken heart." Through faith, the penitent sinner realizes he is close to God (Ps 51:6). Such a heart has such an awareness of its own sinfulness and such grief and anxiety over the sin that it despairs in itself. However, the heart with the gospel can indeed turn to God. David's wisdom of the broken heart is none other than the gospel itself. Such a heart speaks these words of David,

> Truly my soul finds rest in God;
> my salvation comes from him.

[57] The word for blighted here is "struck" (נכה), the same word for David's "struck conscience". However, the word is also often used with vegetation (cf. Ex 9:25, Jnh 4:7), so it is likely not used in regard to the "conscience."

Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress,
I will never be shaken" (Ps 62:1 NIV).

Psalm 51:6-18 – Healing the Broken Heart

It is the broken heart which serves as the "turn" for this penitential narrative. Slowly one can see as the heart of the sinner breaks down: from awareness of guilt, to pain and grief, to terror before God, and finally to where the heart "faints" anticipation of his mercy. It is at the point of the broken heart where the focus leaves the sinner. Here the burden of the righteous law of God is lifted—here transpires God's intervention. David describes this,

Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. (Ps 62:5-8 NIV).

The first two verses above are a close repetition of the first two lines of the psalm. The word for "rest" comes from the Hebrew root דמם, which means "be or grow dumb, silent, still."[58] Leupold notes the "spirit of peace and rest" in these verses and thus renders the first line, "My soul, be resigned, looking only to God."[59] The last verse in this section also parallels this thought nicely: David implores others to "pour out" (שִׁפְכוּ) their heart before God. The broken heart is the most important facet of salvation because here the penitent sinner resigns himself to God.

It is at this implied stage of the heart where Psalm 51 resumes. David has acknowledged his sin before the Lord—his sin since birth (v. 1-5). He has approached God with the wisdom of the "broken heart," relying utterly on him (v. 6). Now David asks the Lord to be absolved,

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity. (Ps 51:7-9 NIV)

The first line in this section has strong ritualistic overtones for a Hebrew listener. The word "hyssop" (אֵזוֹב) is used in the Old Testament in rites of purification for sacrifices, temple worship ceremonies, and houses (cf. Ex 12:22, Lev 14, Nu 19). However, the object of purification is not a "thing" in this passage, but a person. David asks God to cleanse "him."

[58] Brown, 198.
[59] Leupold, 458-459.

The words David uses in this part of Psalm 51 also emphasize his deep longing for cleanliness. He addresses God as the source of his purification ("Wash me!"). God's power of forgiveness is expressed through the verbal ideas in this psalm. The word אַלְבִּין ("I will be whitened") has a powerful connotation. It is the same word the prophet Isaiah uses to cleanse sins that are "as scarlet" (cf. Is 1:18). In other words, these sins are evident before God and also evident to David. He further emphasizes this by writing הַסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ ("make your face hidden"). He can't bear to have God look at his sin. Here Stoeckhardt says,

> We see that David ever and again becomes aware of his sins. He cannot forget them. They rise up as his accusers in his heart and conscience. It is beyond man's power to erase them from his memory but what man cannot do, that God can do. David knowing this turns to God and asks Him to put his sins out of His sight, so that He sees them no more.[60]

David cannot continue with this thought of sin. He also uses word מְחֵה ("blot out," "wipe away," or "exterminate"). This word is also used in Genesis when God decided he would blot out mankind from the earth through the flood (cf. Ge 6:7). David is seeking to be purged of his sin with the same force and power.

David also mentions the bones which God "crushed" (דִּכִּיתָ). The same word is used for when David was crushed (נִדְכֵּיתִי) under God's wrath in Psalm 38. Yet David's language is not defeatist—he prays that these "crushed bones" would "rejoice" (תָּגֵלְנָה). In Psalm 16, David uses a similar expression (יָגֶל כְּבוֹדִי, "my glory rejoices") in parallel with his heart "gladdening" (שָׂמַח) to express his joy that God won't abandon his soul to Sheol (cf. 16:10). Here, too, God's divine intervention imparts life to David's "crushed" substance.

David's words in verse 10 emphasize God's cleansing work even more vividly: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps 51:10 NIV). God's verbal action provides a vivid picture for God's divine work. The word for "create" (בְּרָא) has a very specific use in the Old Testament. The subject of this verb is always God and it is used to express divine "creation" or "transformation."[61] David is acknowledging that God can "transform" his heart in a way nothing else can. The verb ברא is paralleled with the verb חַדֵּשׁ ("renew") suggesting that this is indeed a "new creation" of the לֵב.

The adjective טָהוֹר ("pure") is also used for the heart in this passage; David used the verb form in verse 7 to describe the "cleansing" of hyssop. Here again this word brings connotations

[60] Stoeckhardt, 132.
[61] Brown, 135.

from Old Testament purification. David desires a heart that is considered to be ceremonially clean before God. This is not a work of David, but rather a pronouncement on David by God in much a similar way that the Levites would pronounce the sick to be clean (cf. Lv 13).

David not only implores God to cleanse his heart—he also asks God to preserve his heart as well. David prays, "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me" (51:11 NIV). Here David's use of the phrase רוּחַ קָדְשְׁךָ presents a clear reference to the Holy Spirit. This verse is similar to a passage written by the prophet Isaiah,

> Yet they rebelled
> and grieved his Holy Spirit.
> So he turned and became their enemy
> and he himself fought against them.
> Then his people recalled[a] the days of old,
> the days of Moses and his people—
> where is he who brought them through the sea,
> with the shepherd of his flock?
> Where is he who set
> his Holy Spirit among them, (Is 63:10-11 NIV)

The same theme of losing the Holy Spirit (רוּחַ קָדְשְׁךָ) is found in both of these passages. Thus, Leupold argues this correlation makes it evident that the "Holy Spirit" is not a principle but a personal divine Spirit.[62]

Additionally, David's use of the word רוּחַ ("spirit") following the expression ברא indicates a strong Genesis undertone. The opening chapter remarks, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Ge 1:2 NIV). It would be no stretch of the imagination to presume that David is referring to the active preserving work of the Holy Spirit as in Genesis 1. This thought is supported by the next verse. David writes, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (Ps 51:12 NIV). The verbs הָשִׁיבָה ("restore") and תִסְמְכֵנִי ("sustain") summarize God's actions of cleansing and preservation on David.

David's tenor changes over the next section of verses. The hope of receiving a "pure heart" transforms into a stated fact,

> Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
> so that sinners will turn back to you.
> Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
> you who are God my Savior,
> and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
> Open my lips, Lord,

[62] Leupold, 405.

and my mouth will declare your praise. (Ps 51:13-15 NIV)

David expresses his reaction to God's forgiveness as though it had already happened. He not only states his own actions ("I will teach transgressors") but also the effect of his action ("sinners will turn back to you"). Although he exhorts God to help him ("deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed"), yet David acknowledges him with confidence as "God my Savior." Furthermore, David's request for the Lord to "open" his lips does not ask for purity, but opportunity. David's words are purely conditional: "Open (תִּפְתָּח) and I will speak (יַגִּיד)." David speaks similarly in Psalm 40: "I do not seal my lips [שְׂפָתַי], LORD, as you know. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart [בְּתוֹךְ לִבִּי]" (Ps 40:10-11 NIV). Thus David expresses the joy and thanksgiving that comes from a heart which is already cleansed.

David now directs his psalm to "broken heart." This section provides the lens through which the rest of the psalm may be viewed. In Psalm 34, David already expressed that the Lord "is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit" (Ps 34:18 NIV). But now he is expressing a different aspect of the broken heart in repentance. The broken heart is something which God "will not despise." In fact, the first phrase parallels this thought—the "broken spirit" is considered to be the "sacrifices of God." The construct phrase זִבְחֵי אֱלֹהִים could perhaps have a narrower sense. Joüon-Muraoka proposes the phrase be better rendered here, "sacrifices (pleasing) to God."[63] The broken heart is key to penitence because it lies in the weakness of humankind and the loving grace of the mighty God. Luther writes,

> He says, "a contrite and humbled heart," one that has become small not factiously but truly, one that almost dies of despair. […] Thus we see that our theology is a Word of life and righteousness because it battles and strengthens against sin and death and cannot be exercised except in sin and weakness. It is also a Word of joy, whose power cannot be seen except in sadness and afflictions. But this is the way we are.[64]

When David expresses the brokenness of heart, he rejoices in how God can overcome his human weakness. David did not believe his sin with Bathsheba was the root of his failure. Indeed, he acknowledged his sinfulness from birth and his inability to stand before God. But he also knew that not even such a sin could separate him from God. It was not good works that would save David—it was God's sheer grace.

[63] Paul Joüon, and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2006), §129g.
[64] Luther, 405.

Psalm 69 – The Atoning Broken Heart

If one were to exclusively refer to the book of Psalms for the doctrine of repentance, the results would be enigmatic. David speaks of wisdom in "pouring out" the heart to God (Ps 62:8), but there is an elemental key missing from David's writing; namely, *how* God's love is manifested to the sinner. Psalm 69 provides strong allusions to what is prefigured throughout the Old Testament—this psalm points to none other than the Messiah. Psalm 69 is undoubtedly a messianic psalm, since portions of it are quoted in the New Testament as Jesus' fulfillment. Although this messianic psalm was written roughly a millennium before the arrival of Jesus Christ, it still speaks the powerful message of a broken heart in the context of Christ's passion.

The beginning of David's psalm opens with a cry for help from distress. Similar to David's cry for mercy in Psalm 32 and 51, so also the psalmist cries for help,

> Save me, O God,
> for the waters have come up to my neck.
> I sink in the miry depths,
> where there is no foothold.
> I have come into the deep waters;
> the floods engulf me.

Brug notes that "raging floodwaters and deep mud often symbolize troubles too difficult for the believer to overcome by himself or herself (Isa 43:2; Ps 40:2). Here they symbolize the overwhelming burden of our sin and the depths of suffering which Christ endured because of it (Jn 12:27)."[65] The "weariness" (יָגַעְתִּי) is similar to what David wrote in Psalm 6 when he was awaiting God (v. 3; cf. Ps 6:6). Although there are no references to any of these lines in the New Testament, it is not difficult to see passive obedience of Christ in his suffering.

Not only does the psalmist share in the suffering of a sinner, he also shares the feelings of guilt before a righteous God. He writes, "O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you" (Ps 69:5 NIV). Just as David announced that he had done evil in the sight of God (Ps. 51:4), so also the messianic figure in Psalm 69 speaks of the wrongs that remain uncovered before God.

As the psalm progresses, its tone becomes increasingly urgent. The psalmist's writing expresses haste, "answer me quickly, for I am in trouble" (Ps 69:17 NIV). This voice of fervency can also be seen in the New Testament when Jesus prays to his Father in Gethsemane. Jesus expresses to his disciples, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mt 26:38

[65] Brug, *Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, 634.

NIV). The Gospel writer Luke also notes Christ's "anguish" and describes his sweat as "drops of blood falling to the ground" (Lk 22:44 NIV). Just as the penitent sinner cries out, "How long?" so also the Savior awaited his deliverance from torment. The Messiah surely sympathizes with the heart of the sinner.

The guilt and suffering of this psalm imply much more than the pain of a struggling sinner—they imply the utter separation from God. The psalmist's language brings to mind what David wrote in Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1 NIV). Such were the words that Jesus spoke on the cross when he was facing the full guilt of his punishment (cf. Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34). Jesus bore the full guilt of the world and faced the full wrath of God for the sins of humankind. Like the sinner exposed before God, the Messiah's heart was weighed down with the knowledge of his guilt before God's righteous law.

The psalmist also begins to mention his various enemies. He writes, "Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head" (Ps 69:4 NIV). Although the Messiah does carry guilt for his sin, he leads a life that is completely innocent. Jesus quotes this passage when he is speaking to his disciples about the world, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." (John 15:18).

Yet amid the psalmist's cries for help, acknowledgment of guilt, and fear of his enemy, he also makes a selfless appeal: "Lord, the LORD Almighty, may those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me; God of Israel, may those who seek you not be put to shame because of me" (Ps 69:6 NIV). Other psalms speak of hoping in God to avoid shame. David speaks thus in Psalm 34, "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame" (Ps 34:5 NIV). However, the psalmist in Psalm 69 phrases this truth in a slightly different way by adding the phrase "because of me" (בִּי; lit. "in me").

The psalmist's words sound similar to some words of Jesus in the New Testament. In his High Priestly Prayer in John 17, Jesus has a similar plea praying for those who believe in him (πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ; cf. v. 20). Instead of pleading to avoid disgrace, Jesus' prayer is stated in the positive: "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one" (Jn 17:22 NIV). As the source of hope for believers, Jesus' perfect life, obedience and death was to assure that no penitent sinner would have to suffer disgrace; rather, Jesus' ultimate will was that through him all believers would glory.

Although penitent sinners will not suffer disgrace through him, the Messiah speaks of scorn (חֶרְפָּה) for himself. He writes, "For I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face" (Ps 69:7 NIV). The psalmist also adds, "the insults (חֶרְפּוֹת) of those who insult you fall on me" (Ps 69:9 NIV). The apostle Paul refers to the scorn as being fulfilled through the life of Christ. He writes, "For even Christ did not please himself" (15:3 NIV). Indeed, although Christ did not want others to suffer disgrace on account of him, he came as an object of scorn.

Scorn is engrained into the life of the psalmist. He continues to describe the scorn of others against himself. He writes, "When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn" (69:10 NIV). He also depicts himself wearing sackcloth and receiving ridicule from those who are at the gate (cf. v. 11-12). He laments to God, "You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed; all my enemies are before you" (69:19 NIV). The psalmist's tone indicates that this is something God has allowed to happen. The psalmist is scorned, yet God sees it and does nothing.

The next words of the psalmist draw an unmistakable scene. The psalmist becomes overwhelmed by the scorn heaped upon him. He relinquishes his emotions,

> Scorn has broken my heart
> and has left me helpless;
> I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
> for comforters, but I found none.
> They put gall in my food
> and gave me vinegar for my thirst. (69:19-20 NIV)

The scene is none other than Golgotha. The scorn is none other than that of the crowd around him which scorns the King of Kings. There are no places for the Messiah to look for relief; no sympathy from his divine Father. The accusations and guilt of the world rested upon his shoulders and the power of God's righteous condemnation broke his heart.

These verses of Psalm 69 represent the ultimate occurrence of a "broken heart." It was here where Jesus endured the weight of the world on his shoulders for the guilt of his sin. Although one psalm mentions, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted" (Ps 34:18 NIV), yet here the psalmist could not be further from God. This broken heart was unique in a way unlike any other. This is the Savior of whom the New Testament book of Hebrews would write, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (Heb 4:15 NIV). The Messiah would have to suffer in the same way as a sinner to identify with a sinner. Even sinless, he would need to be washed "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15). The Messiah would come to

allow this cleansing and forgiveness to occur through his own purity. Just as he would have to understand sinners, so he would suffer as one.

The prophet Isaiah describes the anguish in the heart of the Messiah. In chapter 53, he writes that the Messiah would be "despised" (נִבְזֶה) by humankind (v. 3). He also clearly describes clearly Christ's act of atonement: "Surely he took up our pain // and bore our suffering, // yet we considered him punished by God, // stricken by him, and afflicted" (Isa 53:4 NIV). Isaiah's words echo the curse of the guilt of sin upon the Messiah as well as his heavenly Father's righteous judgment against him.

Isaiah also gives a clear picture of the Messiah's "brokenness." He writes, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities" (53:5 NIV). The word that Isaiah uses for "crushed" (מְדֻכָּא) is the verb which David uses for the "broken and *contrite* heart" in Psalm 51. However, the notable difference in this case is that the verb is a *pual* form; thus, the meaning is intensified. August Pieper comments that this word connotes "complete personal destruction."[66] The Messiah was crushed not only by personal guilt and knowledge of God's righteous law, but it was the weight of this law which crushed him.

Verses 22-28 of Psalm 69 describe the punishment for those who are enemies of the psalmist. He asks God to repay his enemies for what they have done. These words are quoted by Paul in the New Testament to refer to those Israelites who turned their backs on Christ and thus their hearts were hardened (cf. Romans 11:1-10). Verse 25 also is quoted by the Apostle Peter as words of condemnation against Judas Iscariot (cf. Acts 1:20).

Verse 29 represents an immediate change in the psalmists tone. The psalmist adjusts his speech, "But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high!" (Ps 69:29 ESV). This transition marks the change from the psalmist's lowliness to prominence. The scene quickly changes from the Messiah's passion to his exaltation. The word the psalmist uses for his exaltation (תְּשַׂגְּבֵנִי) means "be (securely) high.[67]" This word not only suggests a heightened status, but also security. Such words bring to mind what Paul writes in Philippians, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name" (Php 2:9 NIV). Although the Messiah was "pierced" and "crushed," he would be restored.

[66] August Pieper and Erwin E. Kowalke, *Isaiah II: An Exposition of Isaiah 40-66*, (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House, 1979), 441.
[67] Brown, 960.

The last verses of Psalm 69 begin to describe the benefit of the psalmist's salvation for others. Out of the joy of his salvation, the psalmist writes "I will praise" and "I will give thanks" (v. 30). He also writes, "This will please the LORD more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hooves" (v. 31 NIV). The sacrificial language of the psalmist is different from Psalm 51; it is, in fact, the reason the sacrifices of the "broken and contrite" heart will not be despised. The author of the book of Hebrews writes, "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10 NIV).

Psalm 69 is a reminder of the ultimate crushed heart—the heart of the Messiah. Not only does the Messiah sympathize with the pain of the "broken heart," he faced the true wrath of God so that penitent hearts will no longer be broken.

Psalm 51:18-19 and Psalm 147 – The Word Power over Broken Hearts

The end of Psalms 51 and 69, as well as the entirety of Psalm 147 all speak of similar themes of redemption of the peoples of Israel. The combined message shows what the life of the penitent sinner is after his or her redemption. Together, these verses picture how the broken heart reacts after it has been mended.

The last two verses of Psalm 51 seem to be a completely unrelated stanza from the rest of the penitential psalm. David's voice shifts from a personal plea to an appeal for Zion. He writes,

> Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
> build up the walls of Jerusalem;
> then will you delight in right sacrifices,
> in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
> then bulls will be offered on your altar. (NIV, Ps 51:18-19)

It is curious that the writing style of David changes so quickly. Brug comments, "Sin rarely affects only the sinner and his or her immediate victims. It harms the whole body of Christ."[68] Yet most important here again is David's mention of "sacrifices" (זִבְחֵי). This is immediately following the passage of a "broken and contrite heart." David wishes that all Jerusalem would offer "right sacrifices" (זִבְחֵי־צֶדֶק). He wants all to come before God and receive the true cleansing which is given through a heart that is broken.

The first verses of Psalm 147 begin very much the same way that Psalm 51 ends. The first words the psalmist utters reveal the theme of the song, "Praise the LORD" (v. 1 NIV). The

[68] Brug, *Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, 514.

exultation in verse 1 serves as the theme for the rest of the psalm. Then the psalmist writes, "The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel" (Ps 147:2 NIV). Even though there is no name ascribed to the author of 147, there is a parallel in thought with David. Both take joy in the idea of Jerusalem being built. The difference in these psalms lies only in the way this joy is stated: in Psalm 51, David was asking God to do these things; in Psalm 147, the author proclaims what the Lord is already doing. In any case, the Lord accomplishes good for his people always.

The psalmist then expands on why "a song of praise is fitting" (v. 1 NIV). He writes, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (v. 3 NIV). Psalm 34 expressed how the Lord was "close" to the brokenhearted. Psalm 51 proclaimed that the broken heart is an acceptable sacrifice to God. Psalm 69 revealed the broken heart of the Messiah as the necessary price for salvation, a necessary stage on the path to his place on high. Now this passage expresses what the Lord does to those who are "broken in heart"—he mends them.

Yet the psalmist lists the broken heart as just one of the many reasons to praise God. He praises God for his understanding (v. 4-5), he praises him for his justice (v. 6), for his power over nature (v. 8-9), and also for his sovereignty over warriors (v. 10). The Lord is surely capable of many things. Following his announcements of praise for God, the psalmist addresses Jerusalem and Zion. He proclaims that the Lord provides security and blessing to them (v. 13-14). Such is the blessing of those who take refuge in God and lean their broken heart on him.

Another section of Psalm 147 continues to talk about God's power over nature. However, there are some notable differences in the way he expresses God's power. The psalmist writes,

> He sends his command to the earth;
> his word runs swiftly.
> He spreads the snow like wool
> and scatters the frost like ashes.
> He hurls down his hail like pebbles.
> Who can withstand his icy blast?
> He sends his word and melts them;
> he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow. (Ps 147:15-18 NIV)

The content of these verses is full of imagery of weather and storms. Here also another thought is introduced—"his word" (דְּבָרוֹ). Here God's word and his power over nature are intertwined. The psalmist's language is perhaps an allusion to creation, but it might possibly indicate something else. The psalmist uses the power of nature and his word in parallel together. Just as "his word

runs swiftly," so the powers of nature are carried out. He has the power in nature to send the "icy blast" and his word can "melt" a person.

The psalmist's words somewhat resonate with the words of the prophet Isaiah when he writes, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish … so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty" (Isa 55:10 NIV). God's Word has power as he has power over nature. The psalmist concludes by remarking: "He has revealed his word to Jacob" (v. 19 NIV). However, "He has done this for no other nation" (v. 20 NIV). Thus this psalm expresses that God's power is exhibited strongly through his word. Thus the psalmist concludes, "Praise the LORD" (v. 20 NIV).

Indeed, it is through the power of the Word of God that the Lord chooses to mend "broken hearts." Through the inspired psalmists such as David, God reveals the cold anguish of the broken heart and the comforting warmth of God's forgiving grace. The words in these psalms have the full power of the almighty God who spoke them. With such words, God reaches out to sinners—to turn them to repentance and to reveal his loving forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

The concept of the broken heart is a word that fits very specifically into the law and gospel narrative. It denotes a heart that is "crushed" by God's righteous law, a heart that in despair is drawn to God's repentance, and then a heart which in faith takes hold of what the grace Christ offers through his atoning work on the cross. Christ's passion serves as the ultimate manifestation of the broken heart—on the cross, he suffered under the full punishment of God's law and can more than sympathize with penitent believers. Finally, those with "broken hearts" can turn to God's Word for healing and salvation. There they can know that Christ's merit and full salvation are won.

APPENDIX A

heart (härt)[69]

n.

1. *Anatomy*

a. The chambered muscular organ in vertebrates that pumps blood received from the veins into the arteries, thereby maintaining the flow of blood through the entire circulatory system.

b. A similarly functioning structure in invertebrates.

2. The area that is the approximate location of the heart in the body; the breast.

3.

a. The vital center and source of one's being, emotions, and sensibilities.

b. The repository of one's deepest and sincerest feelings and beliefs: *an appeal from the heart; a subject dear to her heart.*

c. The seat of the intellect or imagination: *the worst atrocities the human heart could devise.*

4.

a. Emotional constitution, basic disposition, or character: *a man after my own heart.*

b. One's prevailing mood or current inclination: *We were light of heart.*

5.

a. Capacity for sympathy or generosity; compassion: *a leader who seems to have no heart.*

b. Love; affection: *The child won my heart.*

6.

a. Courage; resolution; fortitude: *The soldiers lost heart and retreated.*

b. The firmness of will or the callousness required to carry out an unpleasant task or responsibility: *hadn't the heart to send them away without food.*

7. A person esteemed or admired as lovable, loyal, or courageous: *a dear heart.*

8.

a. The central or innermost physical part of a place or region: *the heart of the financial district.*

b. The core of a plant, fruit, or vegetable, such as a heart of palm.

9. The most important or essential part: get to the heart of the matter.

10. A conventional two-lobed representation of the heart, usually colored red or pink.

11. *Games*

a. A red, heart-shaped figure on certain playing cards.

b. A playing card with this figure.

c. hearts (used with a sing. or pl. verb) The suit of cards represented by this figure.

d. A card game in which the object is either to avoid hearts when taking tricks or to take all the hearts.

tr.v. **heart·ed, heart·ing, hearts**

1. *Slang* To have great liking or affection for: I heart chocolate chip cookies!

2. *Archaic* To encourage; hearten.

[69] Entry taken from: "Heart." American Heritage Dictionary. Accessed December 01, 2016. https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=heart.

Idioms:
at heart
In one's deepest feelings; fundamentally.
by heart
Learned by rote; memorized word for word.
do (one's) heart good
To lift one's spirits; make one happy.
from the bottom/depths of (one's) heart
With the deepest appreciation; most sincerely.
have (one's) heart in (one's) mouth
To be extremely frightened or anxious.
have (one's) heart in the right place
To be well-intentioned.
heart and soul
Completely; entirely.
in (one's) heart of hearts
In the seat of one's truest feelings.
lose (one's) heart to
To fall in love with.
near/close to (one's) heart
Loved by or important to one.
steal (someone's) heart
To win one's affection or love.
take to heart
To take seriously and be affected or troubled by: Don't take my criticism to heart.
to (one's) heart's content
To one's entire satisfaction, without limitation.
wear (one's) heart on (one's) sleeve
To show one's feelings clearly and openly by one's behavior.
with all (one's) heart
1. With great willingness or pleasure.
2. With the deepest feeling or devotion.
with half a heart
In a halfhearted manner.

[Middle English *hert*, from Old English *heorte*; see **kerd-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots V., sense 1, from the use of a heart shape to represent the verb *love*, originally between the letters *I* and *NY* in merchandise meant to be read *I love New York*.]

APPENDIX B

Brown-Driver-Briggs Heading for the Hebrew Word לֵב*

לֵב **n.m.** inner man, mind, will, heart

inner part, midst

I. seldom of things

II. elsewhere *of men:*

1. *the inner man* in contrast with the outer

2. *the inner man,* indef. *soul,* comprehending mind, affections and will, with occasional emphasis of one or the other by means of certain verbs

3. specific reference to

a. *mind*

b. *knowledge*

c. *thinking, reflection*

d. *memory*

4. spec. ref. to *inclinations, resolutions, determinations of the will*

5. spec. ref. to *conscience*

6. spec. ref. to *moral character*

a. goodness

b. evil

c. seat of pride

d. the heart is uncircumcised

7. for *the man himself*

8. as *seat of the appetites* (for which usually נֶפֶשׁ)

9. as *seat of the emotions and passions* (for which usually נפשׁ)

a. of joy and gladness

b. of trouble, sorrow, pain, vexation, trembling, faintness

10. *seat of courage*

* Outline adapted from: Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 523-525.

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