

Psalms 118:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.

Analysis

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. This opening verse establishes the liturgical refrain that threads through all 176 verses of the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118). The imperative *hodu l'YHWH* (give thanks to the LORD) calls God's people to corporate testimony. *Hodu* comes from *yadah*, meaning to acknowledge, confess, praise—not merely private gratitude but public declaration of God's character and deeds.

The dual rationale follows: **for he is good** (*ki tov*) grounds thanksgiving in God's essential character—not circumstantial blessing but intrinsic goodness. *Tov* encompasses moral excellence, benevolence, and reliability. God's goodness isn't dependent on our perception or circumstances; it's His immutable nature. The second reason: **his mercy endureth for ever** (*ki l'olam chasdo*). *Chesed* is that rich covenantal term combining loyal love, steadfast faithfulness, and merciful kindness. *L'olam* (forever) emphasizes perpetual, unending duration—God's loyal love never exhausts, never expires, never fails. This refrain appears 41 times in Scripture, most notably throughout Psalm 136 where it punctuates every verse.

Historical Context

Psalm 118 concludes the Egyptian Hallel, sung at Passover when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:30). Jesus and the disciples likely sang this very psalm before heading to Gethsemane. Jewish tradition prescribes Hallel psalms for the three pilgrimage feasts (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) and Hanukkah. The

psalm's liturgical structure suggests temple worship, possibly from the post-exilic period (5th-4th century BC) when the restored community celebrated God's faithfulness through exile and return. The call-and-response format (vv. 1-4) mirrors ancient Near Eastern worship patterns found in temple liturgies across cultures.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does grounding thanksgiving in God's character rather than circumstances transform your prayer life during difficult seasons?
2. What is the relationship between God's essential goodness and His enduring mercy, and why does the psalmist mention both?
3. How can you cultivate corporate testimony of God's *chesed* within your faith community rather than privatizing thanksgiving?

Interlinear Text

הוֹדוּ	לַיהוָה	כִּי	טוֹב	כִּי	לְעוֹלָם
O give thanks	unto the LORD	H3588	for he is good	H3588	endureth for ever
H3034	H3068		H2896		H5769
חֲסִדּוֹ:					
because his mercy					
H2617					

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 16:34 (Grace): O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Jeremiah 33:11 (Grace): The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.

Psalms 107:1 (Grace): O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 106:1 (Grace): Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 136:1 (Grace): O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 118:29 (Grace): O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

1 Chronicles 16:8 (References Lord): Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.

Psalms 103:17 (Grace): But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

Psalms 100:5 (Grace): For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.