

Concept Summary

In the OT, there are five main groups of words that convey the ideas of “praise” and “thanksgiving.” The most frequently occurring word for this concept is the verb הלל (*hālal*, “to praise”); its family also includes the noun תהלה (*tēhillâ*, “praise”). Thanksgiving is primarily expressed with the verb יָדָה (*yādâ*, “to give thanks”) and the related noun תודה (*tôdâ*, “thanksgiving”). Additionally, other verbs which express the action of praising and giving thanks are רָנַן (*rānan*, “to cry out in praise”), זָמַר (*zāmar*, “to sing praise”), and שָׁבַח (*šābah*, “to praise”). In the NT, there is also a variety of words for these concepts, some of which occur only once or twice in the NT. Common words for this concept include the verbs εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*, “to give thanks”) and εὐλογέω (*eulogēō*, “to bless”).

Theological Overview

Praise and thanksgiving in the OT and NT involves both personal and corporate prayer, musical expression, singing, exhortation, exaltation, and literary expressions of gratitude and worship to God for who he is and for what he has done for creation, his covenant people,

and ultimately for every tribe, nation, and tongue of the world through Jesus Christ. Quite often praise and thanksgiving is described, commended through exhortation, and/or carried out in the Bible in accompaniment with a grounding reason for the praise provided by the person who is praising the Lord. These include such praiseworthy and thank-evoking elements as: God’s righteousness, faithfulness, goodness, his covenant-keeping, steadfast love, and the person and work of Jesus Christ. For example, in Psalms, the people of God praise him because: He is their hope and salvation (Psa 43:5); he is holy and his name is great (Psa 99:3); and his law is characterized by “righteous rules” (Psa 119:62); they also praise him because of his wonderful works (Psa 139:14) and steadfast love (Pss 63:3; 147:12). Other times the authors of Scripture exhort the people to thank and praise God, as in Psa 100:4, where the psalmist exhorts the people, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving (תודה, *tôdâ*), his courts with praise (תהלה, *tēhillâ*). Give thanks (יָדָה, *yādâ*) to him; bless his name!” (see also Pss 22:23; 107:32; 147:7; Isa 42:12).

Additionally, the Scripture contains proclamations in which a worshiper declares an intention to praise God. For example, in Psa 35:18 the psalmist declares: “I will give thanks (*yādâ*) to you

in the great assembly; among the mighty people I will praise (הָלַל, *hālal*) you” (see also [Psa 69:30](#); [106:48](#); [109:30](#)). The psalms also praise God continually using the exclamation הַלְלוּ-יָהּ (*hallû-yāh*, “Praise Yah”), which is often transliterated from the Hebrew and Greek as “Hallelujah” and “Alleluia” (e.g., [Psa 111:1](#); [117:2](#); [146:10](#); [150:6](#)).

The Scriptures also present nonhuman entities—such as heaven and earth—as praising the Lord ([Psa 69:34](#); compare [Psa 89:5](#)) and all God’s works ([Psa 145:10](#)). Corporate groups such as “the nations” ([Psa 45:17](#)) and broad expanses of geographical regions such as the ends of the earth ([Psa 48:10](#)) are said to participate and to be represented in giving praise and thanks to God. On the other hand, the realm of death called Sheol ([Isa 38:18](#)), the dust, ([Psa 30:9](#)), and carved idols ([Isa 42:8](#)) are all said to be unable to offer praise to God.

In the NT, this awareness and gratitude to God, expressed in praise and thanksgiving, continues. Jesus himself gives thanks at the Last Supper (e.g., [Matt 26:27](#); [John 6:11, 23](#)) and at the miracle of the feeding of the 4,000 ([Matt 15:36](#); [Mark 8:6](#)). Likewise Jesus offers thanks to the Father in [Matt 11:25](#) (compare [Luke 10:21](#); [John 11:41](#)). Throughout the NT, groups of people continually praise God (e.g., [Matt 21:9](#); [Luke 19:38](#); [Rom 14:6](#); [1 Cor 14:17](#); [2 Cor 1:11](#)), Paul thanks God

(e.g., [Col 1:3](#); [1 Thess 2:13](#); [Acts 28:15](#)), healed people praise God ([Luke 18:43](#)), and prayers are written that center on the blessing, praising, and thanking of God ([Eph 1:3, 6, 12, 14](#); [4:8](#)).

Lexical Information

Old Testament

הָלַל (*hālal*). vb. to praise. Describes the act of praising God through prayer, instruments, and singing both corporately and individually.

This verb usually refers to the act of praising but can also mean “to shine” or “to boast” (e.g., [Psa 49:6](#)). It can be used of praising humans (e.g., [Gen 12:15](#); [2 Sam 14:25](#)) but in the OT is mostly used for praising God. The Scriptures attest to singers praising (*hālal*) God ([2 Chr 5:13](#)) and musicians offering praise (*hālal*) to God with lyres ([1 Chr 25:3](#)); harps ([Psa 71:22](#)); and the trumpet, lute, tambourine, dance, strings, pipe, and cymbals ([Psa 150:3–5](#)). The Scriptures offer exhortations to praise God, such as [Psa 107:32](#): “Let them exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praise (*hālal*) him in the assembly of the elders” (compare [Psa 22:23](#); [106:48](#)). People also declare that they will praise God, as in [Psa 146:2](#): “I will praise (*hālal*) Yahweh while I live; I will sing praises (זָמַר, *zāmar*) to my

God while I am still alive” (compare [Psa 35:18](#); [69:30](#)). Reasons for praising God are often given, including: God’s righteous rules ([Psa 119:164](#)), God’s goodness ([Psa 135:3](#)), the exalted nature of his name and his majesty ([Psa 148:13](#)), and his mighty deeds and excellent greatness ([Psa 150:2](#)). Even nonhuman and nonbiological entities are exhorted to express praise to God, including the angels, all God’s hosts, the sun, moon, stars, highest heavens, waters, sea creatures, and the deep ([Psa 48:2–4, 7](#)).

The Psalms often use the expression [הַלְלוּ-יְיָ](#) (*hallû-yāh*, “Praise Yah”), which combines *hālal* with [יְיָ](#) (*yāh*), the shortened form of God’s name [יְהוָה](#) (*yhwh*, “Yahweh”; e.g., [Psa 11:1](#); [135:21](#); [146:1](#); [148:1](#)). This expression does not occur in the OT outside the Psalms.

[תְּהִלָּה](#) (*tēhillâ*). n. fem. **praise, thanksgiving**. *Describes praise and thanksgiving to God.*

This noun is related to the verb [הָלַל](#) (*hālal*, “to praise”). It usually refers to praise offered to God. Sometimes a worshiper declares an intent to praise God, as in [Psa 71:14](#): “I will hope continually and increase your praise (*tēhillâ*)” (see also [Psa 51:15](#); [106:47](#); [Isa 42:12](#); [43:21](#)). In other instances, the word is used in an exhortation to praise the Lord (e.g., [Psa 66:8](#): “Bless our God, O peoples, and cause

sound of his praise (*tēhillâ*) to be heard”). In several instances, the Scriptures attest to a process by which God enables worshipers to become “a praise (*tēhillâ*).” For example, in [Isa 61:11](#) Yahweh “will make righteousness sprout, and praise (*tēhillâ*) before the nations” (see also [Jer 13:9](#); [Deut 26:19](#)), and in [Zeph 3:19](#), he empowers the people such that their shame is turned into praise (*tēhillâ*). Ultimate praise is suitably directed only to God, not to idols ([Isa 42:8](#)).

[יָדָה](#) (*yādâ*). vb. **to give thanks, praise**. *Describes the act of giving thanks and praise to God.*

This verb primarily refers to giving thanks; the majority instances of *yādâ* in the OT are in Psalms. Like other terms with similar meanings, *yādâ* is often accompanied by an explanation of the reason for the thanks or praise. Reasons for which people thank (*yādâ*) God include the birth of Leah’s son ([Gen 29:35](#)), the righteous rules of God ([Psa 99:3](#)), the righteousness of God ([Psa 7:17](#)), the goodness of God ([Psa 54:6](#)), and the great and holy name of God ([Psa 99:3](#)). The verb can be used in an exhortation inviting people to thank (*yādâ*) God, as in [Psa 97:12](#): “Be glad in Yahweh, you righteous, and give thanks (*yādâ*) to his holy name” (see also [Psa 30:4](#); [105:1](#); [118:29](#)). The intent and act of praise and thanksgiving can also be declared by the worshiper in a statement like that in [Psa](#)

86:12: “I will give thanks (*yādâ*) to you, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and glorify your name forever” (compare [Psa 108:3](#)). However, Sheol and the dead cannot praise God ([Isa 38:18](#)).

תּוֹדָה (*tôdâ*). n. fem. **thanksgiving, sacrifice of thanksgiving, thank offering.** *Describes the giving of thanks to God, thank offerings, exhortations, and declarations of praise and thanksgiving.*

This noun is related to the verb **יָדָה** (*yādâ*, “to give thanks”). It can refer to thank offerings (e.g., [Lev 7:12](#); [2 Chr 29:31](#); [Psa 56:12](#); [Jer 17:26](#)) and to general thanks given to God ([Isa 51:3](#); [Neh 12:38](#); [Jonah 2:9](#); [Psa 42:4](#)). The word is also used by the scriptural authors to convey declarations of praise, as in [Psa 69:30](#): “I will ... magnify him with thanksgiving (*tôdâ*)” as well as in exhortations to offer praise and thanksgiving, e.g., [Psa 95:2](#): “Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving (*tôdâ*)” (see also [Psa 100:4](#); [147:7](#)).

רָנַן (*rānan*). vb. **to cry out in joy or praise.** *Describes the crying out of a worshiper in joy or praise.*

This verb indicates crying aloud in joyful praise or “singing for joy” as in [Psa 95:1](#): “Come let us sing for joy (*rānan*) to Yahweh!” and [Psa 89:12b](#), which states: “Tabor and Hermon shout joyfully (*rānan*) over your name.”

זָמַר (*zāmar*). vb. **to sing praise.** *Indicates the act of singing praise and praising the Lord.*

This verb means “to sing praise,” and occurs almost exclusively in Psalms, as in [Psa 104:33b](#): “I will sing praise (*zāmar*) to my God while I remain alive” (see also [Psa 7:17](#); [9:2](#); [21:3](#); [30:12](#); [138:1](#)).

שָׁבַח (*šābaḥ*); Aram. **שֻׁבַּח** (*šēbaḥ*). vb. **to praise.** *Describes the act of giving thanks and praise.*

The Hebrew verb *šābaḥ* means “to praise.” In [Psalm 63:3](#) the psalmist declares: “Because your loyal love is better than life, my lips will praise (*šābaḥ*) you.” (compare [Psa 147:12](#)). The Aramaic equivalent *šēbaḥ* has the same meaning, as in [Dan 2:23](#).

New Testament

εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*). vb. **to give thanks.** *Describes the act of giving thanks.*

This verb means “to give thanks.” It is used in the NT only of giving thanks to God, except for one occasion where it is unclear whether the person giving thanks to [Jesus](#) believed him to be God ([Luke 17:16](#)). It is used when [Jesus](#) gives thanks (*eucharisteō*) at the Last Supper (e.g., [Luke 22:17](#), [19](#); [John 6:11](#), [23](#)) and before the miracle of the feeding of the 4,000 ([Matt 15:36](#); [Mark 8:6](#)). Paul often gives thanks (*eucharisteō*), especially for the faith and salvation of the churches to which he is

ministering and writing (e.g., [Rom 1:8](#); [Col 1:4](#)). He also expresses thanks that he did not baptize many at Corinth ([1 Cor 1:14](#)) and that he speaks in tongues more than all of the members of the Corinthian church ([1 Cor 14:18](#)). In Revelation, the living creatures in the heavenly realm give thanks (*eucharisteō*; [Rev 4:9](#); [11:17](#)). Sinful people do not give thanks ([Rom 1:21](#)), and hypocritical religious leaders sometimes give thanks (*eucharisteō*) in an arrogant, presumptuous fashion ([Luke 18:11](#)). The related adjective *εὐχάριστος* (*eucharistos*, “thankful”) occurs one time in [Col 3:15](#), where Paul exhorts the Colossians to be thankful (*eucharistos*).

εὐχαριστία (*eucharistia*). n. fem. **thanks, thanksgiving.** *Describes the expression and experience of being thankful and the action of giving thanks.*

This noun is related to *εὐχαριστέω* (*eucharisteō*) and refers generally to giving thanks to God. [Ephesians 5:4](#) recommends thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) in place of “obscenity,” “foolish talk,” and “coarse jesting.” Likewise, in [Philippians 4:6](#), Paul exhorts the church at Philippi to not be anxious but rather “in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) to let your requests be made known to God.” Christians are to abound in thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) in light of their rootedness in Christ ([Col 2:7](#)). Thus the Scriptures indicate that thanksgiving is a central Christian virtue,

intended to replace despair, anxiety, and worldly ways.

εὐλογέω (*eulogeō*). vb. **to praise, bless.** *Indicates the action of blessing God, in the sense of offering praise to God.*

This verb means “to praise.” It often indicates the offering of, the wish for, or the activity of a blessing from God. However, when humans bless God, this is equivalent to offering him praise. Thus, after [Jesus’](#) ascension, his disciples “were continually in the temple courts praising (*eulogeō*) God” ([Luke 24:53](#)), and during the triumphant entry, the crowds shouted to [Jesus](#), “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed (*eulogeō*) is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” ([Matt 21:9](#); see also [Matt 23:39](#); [Mark 11:9](#); [Luke 19:38](#); [John 12:13](#)).

αἰνέω (*aineō*). vb. **to praise.** *Denotes the act of expressing praise.*

This verb is the most common Septuagint translation of the Hebrew *הלל* (*hālāl*, “to praise”) and is used in the NT only of praising God. In Luke’s account of the triumphal entry the people following him, rejoice, and “praise (*aineō*) God with a loud voice for all the miracles that they had seen” ([Luke 19:37](#)). There are two instances in which the verb is used to express an exhortation to praise: [Rom 15:11](#) (“Praise [*aineō*] the Lord, all the Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise

[ἐπαινέω, *epaineō*] him”) and [Rev 19:5](#) (“Praise [*aineō*] our God, all his slaves, and those who fear him, the small and the great”).

ἔπαινος (*epainos*). n. masc. **praise**. *Describing the quality and action of praise and honor.*

This noun is used in the NT both of praise or approval given to humans (e.g., [Rom 2:29](#); [1 Cor 4:5](#)) and of praise given to God and his qualities (e.g., [Phil 1:11](#)). It occurs repeatedly in [Eph 1](#), where the author uses it in a prayer to God which is offered “to the praise (*epainos*) of the glory of his grace” ([Eph 1:6](#)) and “to the praise (*epainos*) of his glory” ([Eph 1:12, 14](#)). A similar use occurs in [Phil 1:11](#), where Paul prays that the believers might be “filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through [Jesus Christ](#) to the glory and praise (*epainos*) of God.”

ἐξομολογέω (*exomologeō*). vb. **to confess, profess, offer praise**. *Describes the confession or proclamation of the praise of God.*

This verb is the usual Septuagint translation of the Hebrew [יָדָה](#) (*yādâ*, “to give thanks”). In some instances it refers to giving thanks to God, including three main instances in which [Jesus](#) thanks the Father ([Matt 11:25](#); [Luke 10:21](#); [John 11:41](#)). In other cases it refers to confessing sin (e.g., [Matt 3:6](#)).

ψάλλω (*psallō*). vb. **to sing praise**. *Conveys the act of singing praise.*

This verb is the usual Septuagint translation of the Hebrew [זָמַר](#) (*zāmar*, “to sing praise”). It occurs five times in the NT, where it denotes singing praise to God (e.g., [1 Cor 14:15](#); [Jas 5:13](#)).

ὕμνέω (*hymneō*). vb. **to sing praise**. *Conveys the act of singing praise.*

In the NT, this verb always refers to the singing of praise by the people of God ([Matt 26:30](#); [Mark 14:26](#); [Acts 16:25](#); [Heb 2:12](#)).

JOHN FREDERICK

See Also

- **Related Concepts:** [Assembly](#), [Religious](#); [Blessing](#); [Joy](#); [Worship](#)
- **Bible Sense Lexicon:** [to be praised](#), [to be thankful](#), [praise \(worship\)](#), [to praise \(religious\)](#), [praiseworthy](#), [praiseworthy thing](#), [to sing praises](#), [song of thanksgiving](#), [thanksgiving \(religious\)](#), [thanksgiving \(act\)](#)