

TU OR VOUS? HOW FORMAL IS PRAYER IN THE PSALMS?

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Link to presentation materials:

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METHOD

- Define/illustrate characteristics of formal address of a superior, based on HB samples.
- See if there are examples of HB formal prayers outside the Psalms.
- Determine which Psalms have direct address of God (hereafter DA).
- Examine the characteristics of each of the DA Psalms, looking for aspects of formal address or the contrary.
- Quantify the results.

*Methodologically this falls within the realm of *content analysis*.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FORMAL ADDRESS:

- Frequent switching from second to third person language while directly addressing a king
- Jussives are often used to make requests (may the king do x)
- The frequent expression “O Lord the King”/”My Lord the King” (אדני המלך)
- Speakers refer to themselves as the king’s servants.
- One gets the impression that the speakers fear that they could be annoying the king, and that they (probably rightly) fear the consequences of irritating the king.

Sample passages (see the bottom of the marked-up Psalms files):

- 1 Kgs 1:1-37.
- 1 Sam 26:17-20.

NON-PSALMS HB PRAYERS TO CONSIDER

Daniel 9:4-19 (Daniel in behalf of the nation)

Uses a wide variety of designations for God, including Yahweh, God (אלהים), my God, our God, Lord (אדני), refers to himself and prophets as God's servants, much DA using third person language. "Lord" is the most common term used for God.

Conclusion: Has many formal characteristics.

1 Sam 1:11 (Hannah's prayer)

This short prayer includes direct address of Yahweh of Hosts (יהוה צבאות), reference to herself as His maidservant, and third person direct address of God.

Conclusion: Has some formal characteristics.

CODING THE PSALMS

Setup:

- Convert English verse numbers to HB numbers.
- Examine each Psalm to see if it has DA of God.
- Color code for DA and 3rd person DA.

Key to color and font coding:

Clear direct address of God.

Clear direct address using 3rd person language

Possible direct address to God, but with 3rd person language. Many jussives.

Underline means a name or term for God is used in direct address.

3:1 (A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.)

3:2 O Yahweh, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me.

3:3 Many are saying of my soul, "There is no deliverance for him in God." Selah.

3:4 But You, O Yahweh, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.

3:5 I was crying to Yahweh with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.

3:6 I lay down and slept; I awoke, for Yahweh sustains me.

3:7 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me round about.

3:8 Arise, O Yahweh; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.

3:9 Salvation belongs to Yahweh; Your blessing be upon Your people! Selah.

- 12:1 למנצח על השמינית מזמור לדוד:
- 12:2 הושיעה יהוה כי גמר חסיד כי פסו אמונים מבני אדם:
- 12:3 שוא ידברו איש את רעהו שפת חלקות בלב ולב ידברו:
- 12:4 יכרת יהוה כל שפתי חלקות לשון מדברת גדלות:
- 12:5 אשר אמרו ללשננו נגביר שפתינו אתנו מי אדון לנו:
- 12:6 משד עניים מאנקת אביונים עתה אקום יאמר יהוה אשית בישע יפיה
לו:
- 12:7 אמרות יהוה אמרות טהרות כסף צרוף בעליל לארץ מזקק שבעתים:
- 12:8 אתה יהוה תשמרם תצרנו מן הדור זו לעולם:
- 12:9 סביב רשעים יתהלכון כרם זלות לבני אדם:

Excursis: unexpected items.

- Different divine names and terms used for DA of God.
- The number of Psalms which include a mixture of DA and non-DA (i.e., not 3rd person DA, but addressing people as the audience).

Coding continued:

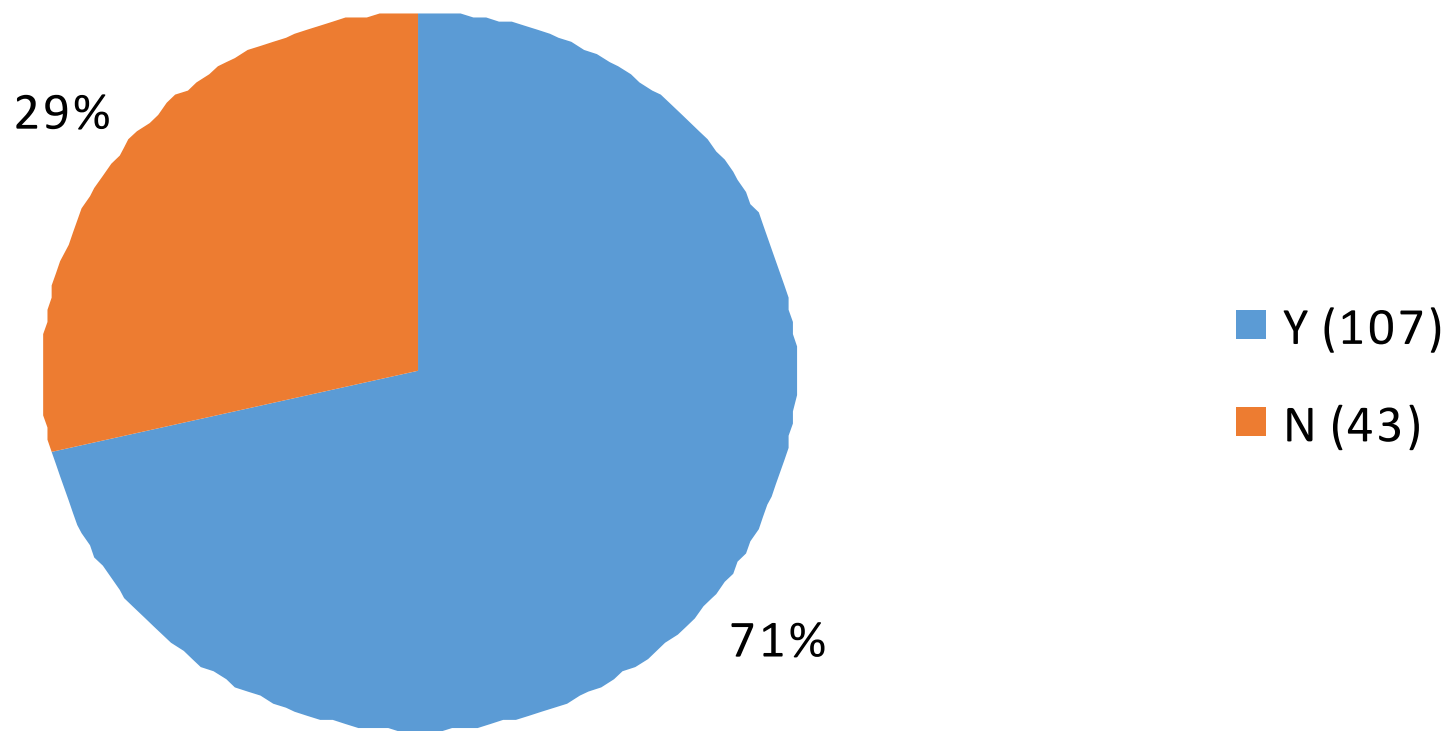
- Add names/designations for God used in DA.
- Track names/designations for God in DA Psalms which are not used in direct address.
- Track mixed DA/non-DA Psalms.

Other experimental items:

- I tried mixing in a broad time-range for Psalms. This needs a lot more work.
- Similarly, superscriptions were added, but not yet utilized.

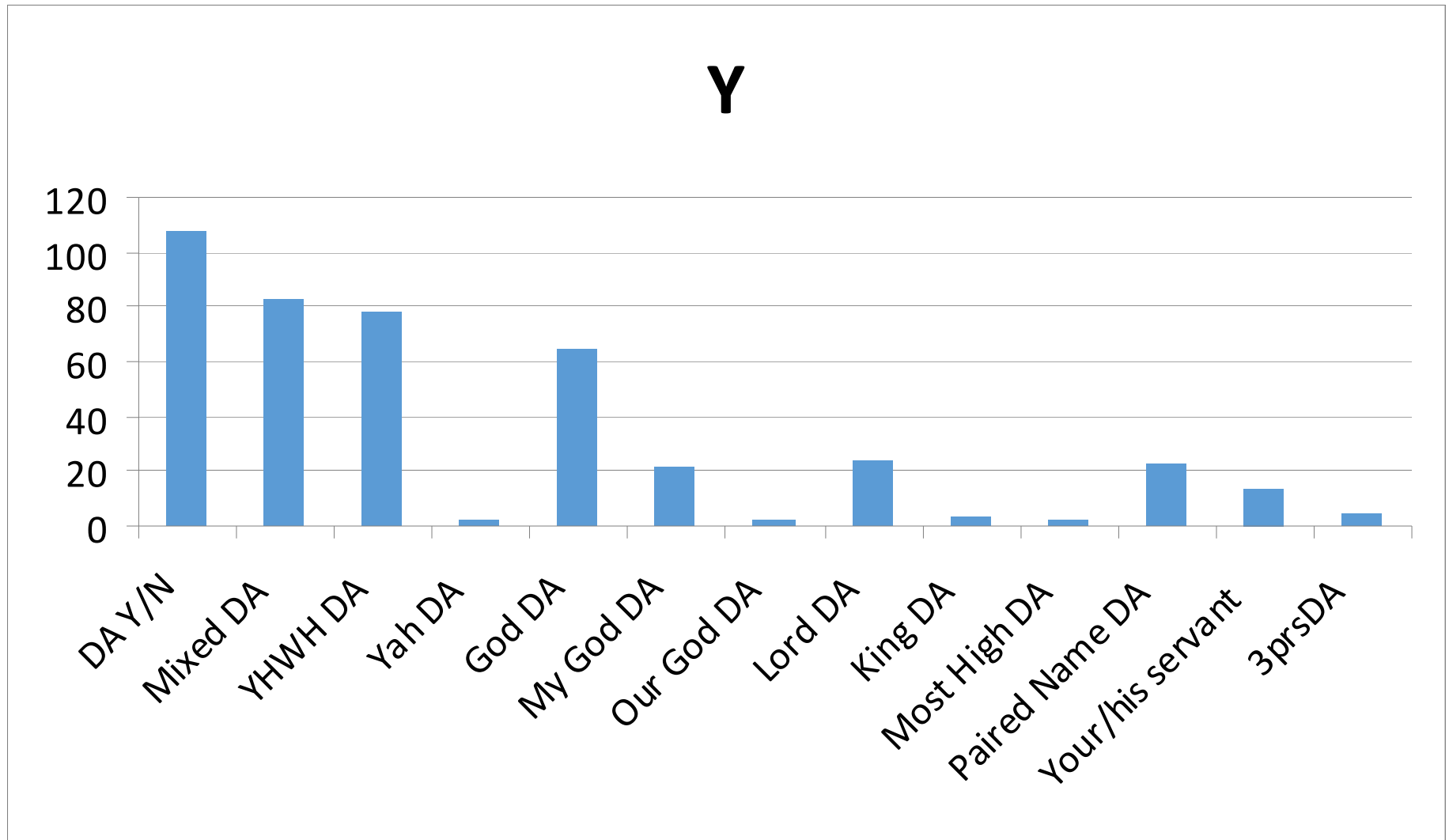
RATIO OF DIRECT ADDRESS PSALMS TO NON-DIRECT ADDRESS PSALMS

DA Y/N

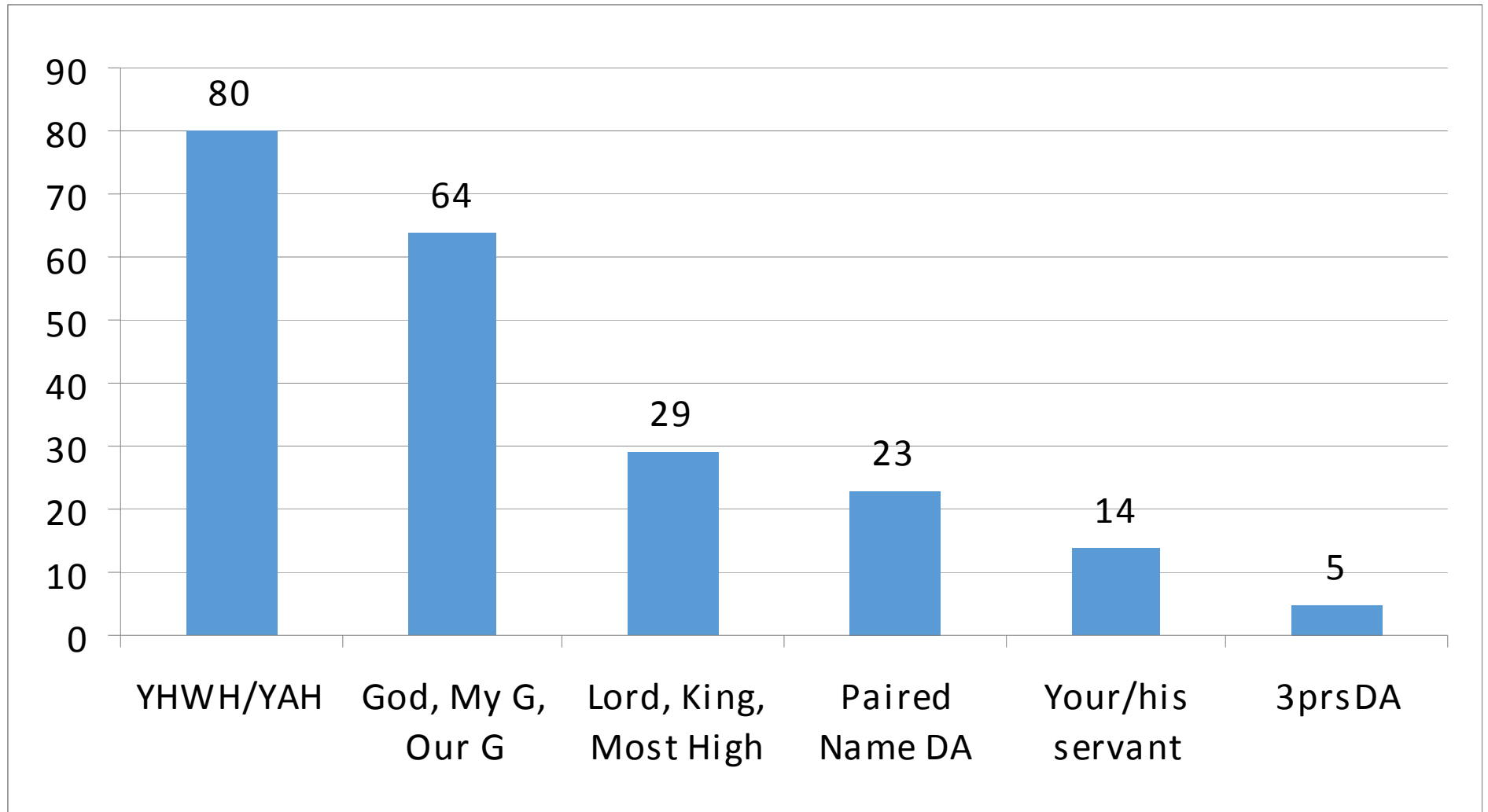


IMPORTANT DIRECT ADDRESS ASPECTS

Y



GROUPING OF NAMES OF DIRECT ADDRESS



NAME OF GOD OBSERVATIONS

- YHWH is used in DA in 3/4 of the DA Psalms. This is 3x as often as Adonai.
- YHWH shows up in 86% of DA Psalms.
- 15/24 Pss which use Adonai in DA also use YHWH in DA.
- 5 of the Adonai DA Pss which do not use YHWH in DA nevertheless contain YHWH somewhere in the Psalm, meaning that only 4 use Adonai without YHWH as a term.

Thus there is no preference for "Adonai" over "YHWH", and no hint that YHWH should not be used in DA in prayer.

THIRD PERSON DIRECT ADDRESS

- 3rd person DA occurs in only 5 Psalms.
- None of these refer to the Psalmist as God's servant.
- 4 have 3rd person requests, but these are fairly general requests for blessing on the Psalmist and the Psalmist's associates or a curse upon the wicked:
 - Let the Lord be mindful of me (40:18)
 - May the King answer us in the day we call (20:10)
 - May God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us (67:2)
 - May Yahweh cut off all flattering lips, The tongue that speaks great things (12:4; perhaps not 3rd prs. DA)
- Of these, only 67 seems to fall into the formal realm, but not to the degree of Daniel 9.
- In other words, 3rd person DA is rare in the Psalms, and even when it occurs with a request, it lacks the character of the non-Psalms samples.

YOUR SERVANT(S)

- 14 DA Psalms refer to the Psalmist as God's servant.
- Of these, I would put 6 in the "maybe formal" realm, and 6 in the "more formal" realm (79;89;90;109;119;132).

"Your servant(s)" seems to be a better indicator of a degree of formality than 3rd person DA language.

MORE FORMAL DA PSALMS

- 7 DA Psalms appear to have a more formal character than the rest (67;79;89;90;109;119;132), with some others being in the “maybe” realm.
- 6 use YHWH in DA, and 4 use Adonai (Lord). None of these use Adonai at the exclusion of Yahweh in DA. Psalm 67, which lacks both YHWH and Adonai, uses Elohim (God).
- 5 of these Psalms are in behalf of the nation, making them similar to Daniel 9.
- This is only 6.5% of DA Psalms. If the “maybe” Psalms are added, that is a maximum of 12% of the Psalms.
- None of these Psalms display the apparent apprehension/fear of the addressee that one sees in direct address of a king.

CONCLUSIONS

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