**The Book of Psalms—Study Guide (Psalm 137-143)**

The Bible always takes precedence in our study of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). This guide is just a “help” compiled from the Soncino commentary, Ambassador College notes, & personal study.

**Psalm 137:** Soncino titles this Psalm “Among the Ruins of Jerusalem.” (This Psalm is actually a prophecy of the Babylonian captivity, both of what would happen during Nebuchadnezzar’s day, and in the end time).

1-2: By the waters of Babylon (see Jeremiah 51:13—Babylon dwelt by many waters), there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows (poplar trees) in the midst of it.

3-4: Those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, and those who plundered (tormented) us asked for mirth (in an obvious insensitive request) saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? (Hymns that were sung during temple worship. See 2 Chronicles 29:25-28).

5-6: If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill (to play the harp). If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth (to lose power to sing or speak)—if I don’t exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy (to give Jerusalem high priority in their lives).

7: Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem (during its captivity and destruction) who said, “Raze it to its very foundations.” See Obadiah 1:10-12 for what Esau did in the past and will do again.

8: O daughter of Babylon (future), you who are to be destroyed. Happy is the one who repays you as you have served us! Happy is the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock! (God will bring upon them the same barbarity they perpetrated on Israel—see Jeremiah 51:24; Isaiah 13:1, 11, 16—which is end time).

**Psalm 138: A Psalm of David.** Soncino titles this Psalm “Thanksgiving to God.”

1-2: I will praise You with all my heart. Before the gods (e*lohim*: the mighty ones--Psalm 82:1), I will sing praises to You. I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth. For you have magnified Your word (which endures forever—1 Peter 1:25), above all Your name.

3-4: In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold (encouraged me) with strength in my soul. All the kings of the earth shall praise the Lord, when they hear the words of His mouth (of God’s promises and their fulfillment). This is millennial when the kings of the earth praise God.

5-6: The kings will sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord (See Isaiah 40:5; 60:1-3). Though the Lord is on high, He does regard the lowly, but the proud He knows from afar (See James 4:6).

7: Though I walk in the midst of trouble (hemmed in by trials), You will revive me (keep me alive with courage). You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand will save me.

8: The Lord will perfect (complete) that which concerns me. God’s mercy endures forever—do not forsake the works of Your hands (See Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:6).

**Psalm 139: For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** Soncino titles this Psalm “God Omniscient And Omnipresent.” Soncino also points out that “this Psalm is the most glorious on the theme of the ways of God and is unequalled in the five Books of the Psalter.”

1-2: O Lord, You have searched me (see Jeremiah 17:10) and known me (all my thoughts and feelings). You know my sitting down and my rising up (compare Deuteronomy 6:7). You (only) understand my thoughts.

3-4: You comprehend (sift to minute scrutiny) my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word (yet) on my tongue (even before it is spoken), but O Lord, You know it altogether.

5-6: You have hedged me (hemmed me in—as in protection) behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge of His oversight is too wonderful (beyond human comprehension). It is high. I cannot attain it.

7-8: Where can I go from Your Spirit, or flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, or if I make my bed in hell (the grave) You are there (from one extreme distance to the other—God is always there). See Amos 9:2.

9-10: If I take the wings of the morning (from the rising of the sun), and dwell in the innermost parts of the sea (to the west), even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.

11-12: If I say, “Surely the darkness will cover me,” even the night shall be light about me (God can penetrate the darkness). Indeed, the darkness shall not hide me from You, but the night shines as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to You. God will protect us anytime and anywhere.

13-14: For You formed my inward parts (internal organs), You covered me (knit me together with flesh and bones, see Job 10:11) in my mother’s womb. I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Your works (especially the human creation in the womb), that my soul knows very well.

15: My frame (skeleton) was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought (literally, “embroidered, alluding to the veins and arteries) in the lowest parts of the earth (in the darkness of the womb).

16: Your eyes saw my substance (the embryo) being yet unformed. In Your book they all were written, (even when there were none yet--the days that were fashioned for me--progress of the embryo to the fetus to birth).

17-18: How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the (vast) sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand (the thoughts of God concerning us are endless). When I am awake, I am still with You.

19-20: Oh that You would slay the wicked, O God! (Compare Psalm 104:35). Depart from me, bloodthirsty men. For they speak wickedly (rebelliously) against You, and they take Your name in vain (Exodus 20:7).

21-22: Do I not hate them who hate You, O Lord? Do I not loathe (with disgust) those who rise up against You! I hate them with perfect hatred (having burning indignation against moral evil—against their selfishness and injustice). I count them as enemies (as God does).

23-24: Search me and know my heart, O Lord (that any imperfections can be brought to light). Try me and know my anxieties (cares); and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

**Psalm 140: For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** Soncino titles this Psalm “Prayer for Protection.” The next four Psalms (140-143), form a distinctive group reflecting similar conditions—of the godly who suffer at the hands of the wicked and the pleas to God for His help and His intervention.

1-3: Deliver and preserve me from evil and violent men who plan evil in their hearts. They continually gather together for war (for bitter strife). They sharpen their tongues (like swords) like serpent’s (fangs). The poison of asps is under their lips (like the bag under the serpent’s tongue that contains venomous poison). Selah.

4-5: Keep me from the hands of the wicked. Preserve me from violent men, who have purposed to make my steps stumble. The proud have hidden a snare for me (like a trap for animals), and cords (like a noose to catch an animal’s leg). They have spread a net by the wayside for me and have set traps (used for birds). Selah.

6-8: I (have) said to the Lord, “You are my God; hear the voice of my supplications. God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head (as with a helmet) in the day of battle (when armor is necessary). Do not grant the desires of the wicked. Do not further his wicked scheme (to be successful), lest they be exalted.

9-10: As for the head of those who surround me, let the evil of their lips cover them (may what they wickedly plan, come back on their own heads). Let burning coals fall on them (as happened to Sodom—Genesis 19:24). Let them be cast into the fire, into deep pits (possibly whirlpools), that they rise not again.

11: Let not a slanderer be established in the earth (See Psalm 101:5). Let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow him. (That the wicked be pursued by God’s retribution, in the same way the wicked pursued the righteous).

12-13: I know (with full confidence) that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor. Surely (with certainty) the righteous shall give thanks to Your name, and shall dwell in Your presence.

**Psalm 141: A Psalm of David.** Soncino titles this Psalm “Prayer against Sinners.”

1-2: Lord, I cry out to You, make haste to help me! Give ear to my voice (an appeal) when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense (Revelation 5:8), the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice (in prayer—Psalm 28:2, 143:5-6).

3-4: Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips (so as to not speak evil as the wicked do). Do not incline my heart (to be tempted) to any evil thing; to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity, and do not let me eat of their delicacies (or participate in their luxuries. See Proverbs 23:6-7).

5: Let the righteous strike me. It shall be a kindness (as in iron sharpening iron—see Proverbs 27:17). And let him rebuke me. It shall be as excellent (refreshing) oil. Let my head not refuse it (see Proverbs 9:8-9). For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked.

6: (When) the evil judges are overthrown by the sides of the cliff (for an example of this, see 2 Chronicles 25:11-12), they (will) hear (and acknowledge) my words, for they are sweet.

7: Our bones are scattered at the mouth of the grave (as a result of the slaughter committed by the wicked judges), as when one plows and breaks up the earth (bones are scattered as ground is broken up by plowing).

8-10: But my eyes are upon You, O God the Lord (Psalm 25:15); in You I take refuge; do not leave my soul destitute. Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, and from the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their nets, while I escape safely. (See Proverbs 26: 27).

**Psalm 142: A Contemplation of David** (“Maschil”—a special type of musical rendering)**. A Prayer when he was in the cave** (1 Samuel 22:1—at Adullum, or 24:3—at En Gedi)**.** Soncino titles this Psalm “Plea for Help.”

1-2: I cry out to the Lord, with my voice (out loud) I make supplication. I pour out my complaint before Him. I declare before Him my trouble.

3-4: When my spirit was overwhelmed in me, You (already) knew my path. In the way in which I walk they have secretly set a snare for me. Look on my right hand and see (I have no defender), for there is no one who acknowledges me. Refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul (life). No human is concerned for me.

5-6: I cried out to You, O Lord: I said (and now say), “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low. Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I.”

7: Bring my soul out of prison (or wretchedness). This can also refer to the future--Isaiah 42:6-7, that I may praise (give thanks in gratitude for deliverance—see Psalm 140:13). The righteous shall surround me (“the righteous shall crown themselves because of me” and will rejoice), for You (will) deal bountifully with me.

**Psalm 143: A Psalm of David.** (Soncino titles this Psalm “Call for God’s Help”). This is a prayer too.

1-2: Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness and righteousness (in the sense of God’s character who forgives) answer me. Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous (See Romans 3:10; Ecclesiastes 7:20).

3-4: For the enemy has persecuted my soul, and has crushed my life to the ground. He has made me dwell in darkness (as in the grave), like those who have long been dead (and forgotten). Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me, and my heart is distressed (numbed by worry and discouragement).

5-6: I remember the days of old. I meditate on all Your works (See Psalm 92:4-6). I muse (ponder) on all the works of Your hands. I spread out my hands to You. My soul longs for You like a thirsty land (Psalm 42:1-2).

7-8: Answer me speedily, O Lord; my spirit fails (Psalm 84:2). Do not hide Your face from me, lest I be like those who go down into the pit (the grave). Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, for in You do I trust. Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You.

9-10: Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies. In You I take shelter (for protection). Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. Your Spirit is good (See Nehemiah 9:20). Lead me in the land of uprightness (free of peril and hardship).

11-12: Revive me, O Lord, for Your name’s sake! For Your righteousness’ sake bring my soul (my life) out of trouble. In Your mercy cut off my enemies, and destroy all those who afflict my soul. For I am Your servant (and I am devoted to Your cause).