**The Book of Psalms—Study Guide (Psalms 17-21)**

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 17: A Prayer of David.** (Psalm 86 and Psalm 142 are also called “A Prayer of David”). Soncino titles this Psalm: “A Prayer.”

1-2: David asked God to hear a just cause; to give an ear to a prayer not coming from deceitful lips; that his vindication would come from God’s presence; and that God’s eyes would look upon the things that are upright.

3: David acknowledged that God tested his heart and tried him and found nothing. He purposed that his mouth would not transgress.

4-5: By the words from God’s lips, he kept himself away from the paths of the destroyer. He asked God to uphold his steps in His path so that his footsteps would never slip.

6-7: David called upon God and asked Him to hear and show His marvelous loving kindness. God saves by His right hand those who trust in Him (Exodus 15:6-7), and saves the righteous from those who rise against them.

8-9: David asked that God would keep him as the apple of His eye (Jacob was also the apple of God’s eye: See Deuteronomy 32:9-10). David also asked to be hidden under the shadow of His wings, and to be kept from the wicked enemies who oppressed and surrounded him.

10-12: The wicked have closed up their fat hearts and have spoken proudly. They surround their human prey and set their eyes crouching down to the earth—likened to a lion eager to tear its quarry, lurking in secret places. Notice Psalms 57:4; 58:6. (Also note 1 Peter 5:8-9--Satan is likened to a lion, ready to devour).

13-14: David asks God to arise and confront the wicked—that they be cast down. And that his life be delivered from the wicked. The men of this world take from God’s possessions and fill their bellies. They are concerned about the physical and are just satisfied with their children, and leave their possessions to them.

15: As for David, he knew that he would see God’s face in righteousness, and be satisfied when he would awake in His likeness. See 1 John 3:2.

**Psalm 18: To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said:** (2 Samuel 22 consists of this Psalm).Soncino titles this: “Song of Triumph.”

1-3: David began by emphasizing his love (deep and fervent affection) for God, his strength and his rock (a mountain crag “Sela”—1 Samuel 23:25-26, 28), his fortress and his deliverer. God was his shield, horn (irresistible strength) of his salvation, and his stronghold in which he trusted to be saved from his enemies.

4-6: The pangs of death surrounded him. The floods of ungodliness made him afraid and the sorrows of the grave—the snares of death—confronted him (See 1 Samuel 20:1-3). In his distress he called upon God, and God heard his voice from His temple, and his cry came to Him, even to His ears.

7-9: Then the earth shook; the foundations of the hills were shaken because God was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils and fire from His mouth. He bowed the heavens and came down with darkness under His feet. (See Isaiah 29:5-6 as an example of how God will deal with the wicked).

10-12: He rode upon a cherub (Ezekiel 1:22-28) and flew upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His secret place, and His canopies around Him were dark waters, and thick clouds. From the brightness before Him,

His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire. (Psalm 97:1-6—Christ’s return has same description).

13-15: God thundered from heaven and sent out His arrows and scattered the foes. Lightning was in abundance and He vanquished the enemies. The channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered at God’s rebuke, as a blast from His nostrils. (Similar to the opening of the Red Sea—Exodus 15:8).

16-19: God drew David out of many waters (Psalm 144:7) by delivering him from his strong enemies and from those who hated him. The enemies confronted him in the day of his calamity (distress), but the Lord was his support. God brought him out into a broad place (he was given relief) because God delighted in him.

20-24: God rewarded and recompensed David according to his righteousness, and the cleanness of his hands (unstained by wrong—Psalm 24:4, 26:6). David kept the ways of God and he did not wickedly depart from Him. David didn’t put away from him God’s statutes, and God dealt with him accordingly.

25-27: With the merciful, God will show Himself merciful. With the blameless, God will show Himself blameless. With the pure, God will show Himself pure, and with the devious, God will show Himself shrewd (seeing their devious plots and thwarting them). God will save the humble and will bring down the haughty.

28-30: The Lord God will light our lamp and will lighten up the darkness. By God, we can run against a troop (See 1 Samuel 30:8), and leap over a wall (2 Samuel 5:6-8). As for God, His way is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:3-4). His word is proven and He is a shield for all those who put their trust in Him.

31-32: Who is a rock except for our God? (Notice Deuteronomy 32:3-4; 1 Corinthians 10:4). It is God who arms us with strength, and makes our ways perfect.

33-34: God makes our feet like a deer (to be swift and agile), and sets us up on high places (Habakkuk 3:18-19). He taught David how to make war and bend a bow of bronze. (No glorification of war is intended here; only the fact that God divinely equipped David for his self-defense—see also Psalm 144:1-2).

35-36: God gives us the shield of salvation. His right hand holds us up and His gentleness makes us great. He enlarges our path under us so that our feet do not slip.

37-39: David pursued his enemies until they were gone. They were wounded and unable to rise again. God was the One who armed him and subdued those who had risen against him.

40-42: God gave David the necks of his enemies. They cried out, but no one was able to save them. Even to the Lord, they cried out, but He didn’t answer them. David beat them as fine as dust before the wind, and they were cast out as dirt into the streets. (Similar to what will happen when Christ returns—Daniel 2:34-35).

43-45: God delivered David from the strivings of the people, and he was made the head of nations. People that David never knew would serve him and foreigners would come from their hideouts and submit to him. Notice the end-time fulfillment of this in Jeremiah 30:8-9, and Ezekiel 34:22-24.

46-47: The Lord lives. Blessed be our Rock. The God of our salvation is to be exalted. It is God who avenges us and subdues those under us.

48-49: God lifts us up above those who rise against us. He delivers us from violent men. “Therefore, I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles.” (This is quoted in Romans 15:9—that the Gentiles would rejoice). 50: God had given great deliverance to David. He showed mercy to David and will also show mercy to his descendants forevermore (See 2 Samuel 7:12, 16).

**Psalm 19: A Psalm of David (To the Chief Musician).** Soncino titles this Psalm: “The Witnesses to God.”

1-4: One of the foremost witnesses to God is the heavens (the stars and galaxies) and the firmament (the expanse of the sky above the earth) which declare God’s glory and His handiwork (Romans 1:20). Both day and night reveal the knowledge and might of God to the whole world.

5-6: In them (day and night) He has set a tabernacle for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and as a strong man ready to run his race. The rising of the sun is from one end of heaven with its circuit to the other end—where nothing is hidden from its heat.

7-8: Another witness to God is that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. God’s testimony is sure and makes the simple wise. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, and His commandment is pure, enlightening the eyes—giving us spiritual insight.

9-11: The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. God’s judgments are true and righteous altogether. They are to be desired more than gold, and are sweeter than honey. Moreover, they warn us how we ought to live, and in keeping them is great reward (Proverbs 22:4). To enter into life, keep the commandments (Matthew 19:17).

12-13: Who can understand one’s errors? So, we have to ask God to cleanse us from secret faults (even ignorance), and to restrain us from presumptuous sins so they don’t have dominion over us. Then we will be innocent and blameless.

14: David asked that his words and the meditation of his heart would be acceptable in God’s sight. The Lord is our strength and our Redeemer (Isaiah 47:4).

**Psalm 20: A Psalm of David (To the Chief Musician).** Some commentators claim this Psalm was written on behalf of David on the eve of a battle. Soncino titles this: “Prayer before a battle.”

1-3: May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; may the God of Jacob defend you, may He send help from the sanctuary, and may He remember all your offerings and accept your burnt sacrifice (an example of offering a sacrifice prior to a battle is 1 Samuel 7:8-10).

4-6: May He grant you according to your heart’s desires, and fulfill your purpose. In the name of God we will set up our banners (See Isaiah 11:12; 13:2-3; Psalm 60:4). May the Lord fulfill all of your petitions. The Lord will save His anointed. He will answer him from heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.

7-9: Some trust in chariots and horses (as did Pharaoh in Exodus 14:6-7, and as did the Syrians in 2 Samuel 10:18), but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They (chariots and horses) have bowed and fallen, but we have risen and stand upright. Save, Lord! (Give us victory). May the King (God) answer when we call.

**Psalm 21: A Psalm of David (To the Chief Musician).** This Psalm was also considered to be written on behalf of David and appears to be a sequel of the previous Psalm. Many references can also be applied to the Messiah when He comes to intervene. Soncino titles this Psalm: “Thanksgiving for Victory.”

1-2: The king (David) shall have joy in God’s strength, and will rejoice in His salvation. God gave David his heart’s desires and did not withhold the request of his lips. God answered his prayers from the previous Psalm.

3-4: God met him with blessings of goodness and set a crown of gold on his head (See 2 Samuel 12:29-30). This will also occur in the future. David asked life from God, and God will give it to him—length of days forever and ever.

5-7: David’s glory will be great in God’s salvation and God will place upon him both honor and majesty. God has made him most blessed forever, and will make him exceeding glad in His presence. The king trusts in God, and it is through God’s mercy that the king shall not be moved.

8-9: God’s hand will find all of His enemies, and will find those who hate Him. They will be made as a fiery oven in the time of God’s anger. The Lord will swallow them up in His wrath, and fire will devour them. This refers to Christ’s intervention when He deals with the wicked (Isaiah 66:15-16; Malachi 4:1).

10-11: God will destroy the wicked’s offspring and descendants because they intended to do evil against Him (Isaiah 14:19-22). They devised a plot which they were unable to perform. See Psalm 83:1-8 as an example of a conspiracy and devious plot.

12-13: God will make them turn their back, and He will make ready His arrows. (He will cause His enemies to flee, but He’ll get ahead of them to aim His arrows at their faces). Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength. We will sing and give praise to Your name.