**The Book of Psalms—Study Guide (Psalms 50-57)**

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 50: A Psalm of Asaph.** (Psalms 73-83 are also of Asaph, who was a contemporary of King David. Asaph was the chief of the Levites who provided music before the ark. See 1 Chronicles 16:4-5). Soncino titles this Psalm: “Israel Arraigned.”

1-2: The Mighty One, the Lord God (El Elohim Adonai--God the Lord) has spoken and calls the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down (this is a call for a tribunal against Israel, for a lesson to the whole earth). God will shine forth out of Zion, the perfection of beauty.

3: Our God shall come and not keep silent (He cannot tolerate hypocrisy and moral corruption). A fire shall devour before Him and it shall be tempestuous all around Him. See Psalm 97:3-6.

4-6: God will call to the heavens and to the earth that He may judge His people. “Gather My saints together, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice” (Israel made a covenant with God—Exodus 24:5-8, but they broke it--Amos 3:1-2). Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge. Selah.

7-11: The tribunal begins: “Hear O My people, and I will speak. O Israel, and I will testify against you. I am God, your God.” God was not going to rebuke them for their sacrifices or burnt offerings. For every beast of the field, and all the cattle on a thousand hills, including all the birds of the mountains, are God’s.

12-15: For the world is Mine and all its fullness. God is not hungry and does not need the flesh of bulls, but He wants His people to offer thanksgiving and pay vows to Him. (Obedience is better than sacrifice—1 Samuel 15:22). In the day of trouble God wants us to call upon Him. He will deliver us (see Joel 2:31-32).

16-17: To the wicked, God says: “What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant on your mouth, seeing that you hate instruction (discipline and moral restraint—it is a late Hebrew word used for ethics) and cast My words (commandments) behind you?”

18-20: When you saw a thief, you consented (or had company and delight) with him. You have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak (calculated and deliberate actions—like the modern media) against your brother, and your mother’s son (your physical brother).

21: You have done these things and (should) I have kept silent? You thought God was altogether like you. But God will rebuke you and set things in order before your eyes.

22-23: Consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces (like a lion) and there be none to deliver (See Hosea 5:14-15). This is a call to repentance. Whoever offers praise glorifies God, and to him who orders his conduct aright, he will see the salvation of God.

**Psalm 51: To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.** (Nathan’s words are in 2 Samuel 12:1-15). Soncino titles this Psalm: “A Penitent’s Cry.”

1-2: David asked for God’s tender mercies, and that God would blot out (erase the record of) his sin. See Psalm 103:12. He also asked to be washed thoroughly from his transgressions and be cleansed from his sin.

3-4: He admitted to his transgressions (plural), and that his sin was before him. (A first step to repentance is to admit error. Psalm 32:5). David acknowledged that his sin was against God (see Genesis 39:9), and he had done evil in the sight of God. He also pointed out that God is just when He speaks, and is blameless when He judges.

5-6: David knew that he came forth in sin—an acknowledgement that we are all influenced by Satan, and so we need God. God desires truth in the inward parts (self-deception and the deception of others is condemned by God—Soncino). God wants us to know His wisdom and that we be perfectly sincere to Him and to others.

7-9: David asked to be purged with hyssop (see Numbers 19:6-7, 18), and to be washed whiter than snow (See Isaiah 1:18). He asked to hear joy and that his broken bones could rejoice (Psalm 38:8: an idiomatic expression describing the effect of pain, grief or a troubled conscience). He asked God to blot out all of his sins.

10-11: He also asked God to create in him a clean heart, and to renew a steadfast spirit in him. He asked that God would not cast him away from His presence nor remove His Holy Spirit from him (which happened to Saul. See 1 Samuel 16:14). David and others had the Holy Spirit in them (Isaiah 63:11; 1 Peter 1:11).

12-13: David asked God to uphold him by His Spirit and to restore to him the joy of His salvation. He would then teach transgressors God’s ways that sinners could be converted to God.

14-17: He asked to be delivered from the guilt of bloodshed (over Uriah). He asked God to open his lips so that his tongue could sing aloud His righteousness and his mouth—to show forth God’s praise. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart which God will not despise. See Isaiah 66:2.

18-19: Finally, David asked God to do good to Jerusalem so that He would be pleased with both the (spiritual) sacrifices of righteousness, and the offerings on the altar. Both will be righteousness in the future (Malachi 3:3).

**Psalm 52: To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul, and said to him, “David has gone to the house of Ahimelech.”** (The story is found in 1 Samuel 21-22).

1: This question was posed to Doeg: Why do you boast in evil? (Doeg prided himself in it). He is noted as a mighty man—which means a tyrant. The goodness of God (“El”—Powerful) is mightier, and endures forever.

2-3: Doeg’s tongue devised destruction (through slander), and was like a sharp razor working deceitfully. He loved evil more than good (See Psalm 34:13-14), and lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah.

4-5: Doeg loved devouring words and had a deceitful tongue. David said that God would destroy him. He would take him away; pluck him out of his dwelling place and uproot him from the land of the living.

6-7: The righteous will see and fear and will laugh at him, saying, “Here is a man (Doeg) who didn’t make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.”

8-9: David, on the other hand, was as a green olive tree in the house of God (See Psalm 92:12-15). He trusted in His mercy, and would do so forever. He would praise God because God would have done all these things. And in the presence of His saints, David would wait (patiently) on God’s name, for His name is good.

**Psalm 53: To the Chief Musician. Set to “Mahalath”** (Literally meaning “a sickness.” Also, it could mean a name of a melody). **A Contemplation of David (**This Psalm is a revised version of Psalm 14).

1-3: The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt and have done iniquity. There is none who does good. God looks down upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand and who seek Him. Everyone has turned aside (Hebrew: “sag”—backsliding), they have become corrupt together.

4-5: The workers of iniquity have no knowledge. They eat up God’s people as bread. They are in great fear (where no fear was). See Proverbs 28:1. God despises the wicked and scatters the bones of those who camp against the righteous.

6: Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion. This will occur when God brings back the captivity of His people. Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.

**Psalm 54: To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A contemplation of David when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, “Is David not hiding with us?”** (This event is found in 1 Samuel 23:19-29).

1-3: Save me by Your name. Vindicate me by Your strength. Hear my prayer, give ear to the words of my mouth. Strangers and oppressors had risen against David to kill him, but they did not set God before them, nor did they fear Him or respect His great power (Psalm 86:14).

4-5: God is my helper (David had confidence in God’s aid). In the Hebrew, the next phrase should read: “The Lord is for me, as the upholder of my soul.” He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth.

6-7: I will freely sacrifice to You, and will praise Your name because it is good (A reference to being saved by God’s name—verse 1). He has delivered me out of all trouble and my eye has seen its desire on my enemies.

**Psalm 55: To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A contemplation of David.** Soncino titles this Psalm: “Treachery Denounced.” (It is a description of a betrayal by a close friend--perhaps by Absalom).

1-3: David prayed that God would give ear to his prayer, and not hide from his supplication. He was restless (distraught) and moaned noisily in his complaint. It was because of the oppression (crushing pressure) of the wicked as they brought trouble upon him and hated him in their wrath.

4-8: His heart was pained within him. Terrors of death came upon him. He was fearful and trembled. He wished for wings of a dove to fly away (which makes its home in the cleft of rocks) and be at rest. He wanted to wander off and lodge in the wilderness. He wanted to hasten his escape from the windy storm (the turmoil in the city).

9-11: David asked God to destroy (confuse—as at the tower of Babel) and divide their tongues (speech). Day and night he had seen violence and strife in the city. Iniquity and destruction (havoc) was in its midst. The oppression and deceit didn’t depart from the streets. The enemy was right there in Jerusalem (Absalom).

12-14: It was not an enemy that reproached him, otherwise he could have borne it. But, it was a man his equal: his companion and his acquaintance (possibly Absalom). They had taken sweet counsel together (they shared confidences), and had walked together to worship at the house of God with all the people.

15: May God cause the wicked to go down alive into hell (Sheol, the grave—this happened to Korah and his cohorts—Numbers 16:30). Their wickedness was in their dwelling places and was (within) them.

16-17: David was going to regularly call upon God. He knew the Lord would save him. Evening (beginning of the day—Genesis 1), morning and at noon, he would pray and cry aloud to God.

18-19: God redeemed David in peace from the battles, and from those who strove against him. For even He (God), abides (is enthroned) from old and can be trusted. Because the enemies didn’t change (from any thought of their actions bringing consequences), it meant that they didn’t fear God.

20-21: David’s traitorous friend had put forth his hands against those who were formerly at peace. His friend broke the covenant (a treaty of peace was broken). The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart. His words were softer than oil, yet they were like drawn swords. See Psalm 120:7.

 22-23: Cast your burden on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). He will sustain you. He shall never permit the righteous to be moved (in contrast to the wicked). But God will bring the wicked down to the pit of destruction. Bloody and deceitful men will live but half their lives. But we will trust in God.

**Psalm 56: To the Chief Musician. Set to “The Silent Dove in Distant Lands.”** (A title and melody of a song to which this Psalm was sung). **A Michtam** (a style of music or a poem) **of David when the Philistines captured him in Gath** (See 1 Samuel 21:10-15). Soncino titles this Psalm: “Faith Triumphant.”

1-4: David asked God to be merciful to him, whereas man would swallow (trample) him up. His enemies hounded and oppressed him all day, and many fought against him. Whenever he was afraid, he trusted in God. In God, he would praise His word, and in God he put his trust. See Psalm 130:5-6.

5-7: All day the enemies twisted (distorted) David’s words. Their thoughts were against him for evil. They gathered together—hid (as in an ambush) and marked his steps, as they were in laying to take his life. He asked God to cast them down and that they would not escape by their iniquity.

8-11: God numbers our wanderings. He puts our tears in His bottle (God remembers them) and are in His book. See Malachi 3:16. When we cry out, the enemies will turn back. David knew this; that God was for him, and he repeats what was stated in verse 4: “I will not be afraid (or fear); what can man do to me?”

12-13: Vows made to God are binding upon us. David rendered praises and thanked God who delivered him from death. David’s feet were kept from falling so he could walk before God. (As Abraham was to do: Genesis 17:1). David was able to live in the light of the living (in contrast to being dead in the darkness of the grave).

**Psalm 57: To the Chief Musician** (A companion to Psalm 56)**. Set to “Do Not Destroy”** (A title and melody of a song—see also Isaiah 65:8—“do not destroy”). **A Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave** (See 1 Samuel 22:1-5). Soncino titles this Psalm: “Confidence in Danger.”

1: David twice asked God to be merciful to him. He acknowledged that his soul trusted in God. In the shadow of God’s wings, he made his refuge, until the calamities passed by. See Psalm 36:7.

2-3: He cried out to God who performs all things. He sends His mercy from heaven and saves. God reproached those (Saul and his armies) who tried to swallow David (trample upon). God shall send forth His mercy and His truth (Psalm 89:14).

4-5: David likened himself to be among lions (savage enemies—Psalm 7:1-2), men who are set on fire (blazing hatred). Their teeth are like spears and arrows, and their tongue is as a sharp sword. But, God is exalted above the heavens, and His glory is above the earth.

6: His enemies prepared a net for his steps. His soul was bowed down (discouraged). They dug a pit for him, but have fallen into the midst of it. See Proverbs 26:27.

7-8: David’s heart was steadfast. He sang and played the lute and harp to awaken the dawn (the coming of the morn of deliverance—Soncino).

9-11: David would praise and sing to God among the peoples and the nations (This could refer to the future when David is King in the millennium, as he never did that before—to sing among the nations). God’s mercy reaches to the heavens and His truth to the clouds (Psalm 36:5-6). The conclusion is repeated from verse 5.