**The Book of Psalms—Study Guide (Psalms 73-77)**

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.

**BOOK THREE (Psalms 73-89).**

**Psalm 73: A Psalm of Asaph.** Asaph was a contemporary of King David and was the chief of the Levites who provided music before the Ark of the Covenant, and was responsible for music at services of thanksgiving (1 Chronicles 16:4-5). Soncino titles this Psalm: “Trail of Faith.”

1-3: God is good to Israel, and to those who are pure (clean) in heart (Psalm 24:3-5). As for Asaph, his feet had almost stumbled and his steps had nearly slipped (away from the right path). Why? Because he was envious of the boastful (arrogant ones) by seeing their prosperity. (King David saw the same thing—Psalm 37:1, 7).

4-5: There are no pangs in their death (they seem to die peacefully), and their strength is firm. They are not in trouble like other men, nor are they plagued (smitten by God) like others. See also Job 21:7-9.

6-7: Pride serves as their necklace. Violence (lawlessness) covers them like a garment. Their eyes (and their face) bulge with abundance. They have more than the heart could wish for (Jeremiah 5:28).

8-9: They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression. They speak loftily (2 Peter 2:18-19). They set their mouth against the heaven, and their tongue walks through the earth (A future event of this: Revelation 13:6).

10-11: The people of Israel returned to evil due to the influence of the behavior of the wicked. The influenced Israelites drained (and accepted), the ideas and sayings of the blasphemers. And they said, “How does God know? And is their knowledge in the Most High?”

12-14: These are the ungodly, who are always at ease. They increase in riches. In contrast: Asaph cleansed his heart in vain and washed his hands in innocence. He was plagued all day, and chastened every morning. (He asked—why the difference between himself and these arch-sinners?) See Proverbs 3:11-12 and Hebrews 12:7-8.

15: So, if he had spoken publicly about his thoughts and doubts, his words would have undermined the faith of

some in Israel. He would have been untrue to the generation of God’s people at that time.

16-17: As he thought about the prospering of the wicked, it was a painful thought for him (a laborious task) as he tried to understand it. It wasn’t until he went to the sanctuary (temple) of God, and he then understood the end of the wicked—they will be destroyed. God is not mocked and He sees all that goes on (Galatians 6:7-8).

18-20: Surely God has set them (the wicked) in slippery places. He casts them down to destruction. They are brought down in a moment, and are utterly consumed with terrors. As in a dream when one awakes, their prosperity will end. So Lord, when You awake (metaphorically), You shall despise their image.

21-24: Asaph admitted that his heart was grieved and that he was vexed, foolish and ignorant (by envying the wicked). He was as a beast (senseless) before God (Psalm 92:5-7). But, he also knew God had not abandoned him. He upheld his right hand and guided him with counsel and would give him glory (in the resurrection).

25-26: Whom do we have in heaven but You? There is none on this earth that we are to desire besides You (See Philippians 3:7-8). Our flesh and heart may fail, but God is the strength of our heart and portion forever.

27-28: For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish. You destroy all those who desert you for (spiritual) harlotry. But it is good to draw near to God. We need to put our trust in God and declare all of His works.

**Psalm 74: A Contemplation** **of Asaph.** (This is a “Maschil”—an instruction or a special kind of music rendering)This Psalm foretells what would happen to the temple and to Judah during the Babylonian invasion. Soncino titles this Psalm: “A National Lament.”

1: “Oh God, why have you cast us off forever?” Similar words are in Lamentations 5:20-22—after Judah was punished (Jeremiah 5:15-17). His anger smoked against the sheep of His pasture (Lamentations 2:3).

2: Remember Your congregation which You have purchased from old (Exodus 15:13,16). The tribe (nation) of Your inheritance is Israel (Jeremiah 10:16), which You have redeemed. This is Mt. Zion where You have dwelt.

3-4: Lift up Your feet (hasten to intervene) as there has already been desolation in Israel. The enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary. Your enemies roar (with battle cries) in the midst of Your meeting place (the temple). They set up their (military) banners for signs of their conquest.

5-6: They seem like men who raise up axes among the thick trees. And now they break down its carved work, all at once, with axes and hammers. (The temple did have carved work—see 1 Kings 6:29).

7-8: They have set fire to Your sanctuary. They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground. They have said in their hearts “Let us destroy them altogether.” They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land. (This happened during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign—2 Kings 25:8-10).

9-10: We do not see our signs (could be referring to prophets not recognizing or seeing visions from God. See Ezekiel 7:25-26). There is no longer any prophet (Lamentations 2:9). Nor is there any who knows how long until God intervenes, or how long the adversary will reproach. Will the enemy blaspheme God’s name forever?

11-12: Why does God withdraw His hand, His right hand? Take it out of your bosom and destroy them. For God is my King from old (Psalm 44:4), working salvation in the midst of the earth.

13-14: You divide the sea by Your strength (Exodus 14:21-23, 27-28). Both the sea serpents and Leviathan represented the armies of Egypt when they drowned in the sea. God gave them as food (the dead bodies of the Egyptians) to the people (folk--the same word is for rock-badgers in Proverbs 30:26) inhabiting the wilderness.

15: You broke open the fountain (God broke open rocks to produce water—Exodus 17:6). God dried up mighty rivers (such as the Jordan River for Israel to cross over—Joshua 3:15-17).

16-17: The day and night are God’s. He prepares the light and the sun (Job 38:12). You have set all the borders of the earth (Acts 17:26). You have made the summer and winter (Genesis 8:22). All are mighty acts of God.

18-19: Asaph asked God to remember that the enemy has reproached Him, and that a foolish (a vile, base) people have blasphemed His name (Deuteronomy 32:21). Do not deliver Your turtledove (a defenseless bird) to the wild beast. Do not forget the life of Your poor forever.

20-21: God will respect and remember His covenant (Exodus 24:7-8 and Leviticus 26:42-45). For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts (homes) of cruelty (places where Israel will be in captivity). Oh, do not let the oppressed (Israel) return ashamed! Let the poor and needy praise Your name.

22-23: Arise, O God, and plead Your own cause. Remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily. Do not forget the voice of the enemies. The tumult of those who rise up against You increases continually. See Psalm 83:2-4 and Isaiah 13:4.

**Psalm 75: To the Chief Musician. Set to “Do Not Destroy.”** (A title of a song and a melody to which this Psalm was sung—see Psalm 57). **A Psalm of Asaph. A Song. A Psalm.** Soncino titles this Psalm: “The Nation’s Gratitude.”

1-3: We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near. When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly (God bides His time and intervenes at the right moment). When God dissolves the earth and its inhabitants, He will set up its pillars firmly (new heavens and new earth).

4-5: I said to the boastful (arrogant), not to deal boastfully. And to the wicked, do not lift up the horn (in defiance). Do not lift up the horn on high. Do not speak with a stiff neck (insolent pride).

6-7: For exaltation comes neither from the east or the west, nor from the south (wilderness), but rather from God (who comes from the farthest north—Job 37:22, and whose throne is in the farthest sides of the north—Isaiah 14:13). He is the Judge and He puts down one and exalts another (see Psalm 147:6; 1 Samuel 2:7-8).

8: For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is fully mixed and He will pour it out. Surely its dregs shall come upon the wicked (See Jeremiah 25:15-17).

9-10: But I will declare forever, and will sing praises to the God of Jacob. All the horns of the wicked will be cut off (See Zechariah 1:18-21), but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

**Psalm 76: To the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.** Soncino titles this Psalm: “God Triumphant.” The defeat of Israel’s foe is a glorification of God’s name.

1-3: In Judah God is known and His name is great in Israel. In Salem (Jerusalem) is His tabernacle and His dwelling place is in Zion. There (later) He will break the arrows, the shields and swords of battle (Psalm 46:9; Zechariah 9:9-10; Micah 5:9-1). It was in Jerusalem where God established His temple and David as King.

4-6: God is more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey (enemies). The stouthearted were plundered (Isaiah 33:1) and have sunk into their sleep (death--Jeremiah 51:57). None of the mighty men have found the use of their hands (they have no strength to resist against God). At God’s rebuke, the enemies are killed.

7-9: God is to be feared. Who may stand in His presence when He is angry? (See Nahum 1:6, and Malachi 3:2). God causes His judgment to be heard from heaven. The earth will fear when God arises to judgment and to deliver all the oppressed of the earth. This is yet to occur in the future.

10: The wrath of man shall praise God, and with the remainder of wrath, God will gird Himself. (Soncino: God girds on Himself—as an ornament, the last futile efforts of human wrath, turning them to His own honor).

11-12: Make vows to the Lord God and pay them (Isaiah 19:21). Let all who are around Him bring presents (tribute) to Him (Psalm 72:10-11), who is to be feared (Isaiah 8:13). He shall cut off the spirit (pride and arrogance) of princes. He is awesome to the kings of the earth (Psalm 68:34-35; Isaiah 49:7).

**Psalm 77: To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun.** (Thetitle of Psalms 39, 62). He is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 25:1, 3; as the director of the temple choir. **A Psalm of Asaph.** Soncino titles this Psalm: “A Cry of Affliction.”

1-3: He cried out to God with his voice, and God gave His ear to him. During the day he sought the Lord, and during the night his hand was stretched out. He prayed without easing (Psalm 28:2). His soul refused to be comforted. Even though he remembered God, his spirit was overwhelmed.

4: His eyelids stayed open (he couldn’t sleep). He was troubled (was perplexed and restless). He couldn’t speak or say the right words in his prayers (See Romans 8:26-27).

5-6: He considered the days of old, the years of the ancient times. He called to remembrance his song of praise in the night (as he had done in the past). He meditated and his spirit made diligent search for answers.

7-9: His questions were: Will the Lord cast off forever? Will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased? Has His promise failed? Has God forgotten to be gracious (Exodus 34:6)? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? (The answers can be found in Psalm 105:8—God remembers His covenant forever).

10-11: His attitude changed. Even though he was in anguish, he remembered the years of the right hand of the Most High. He remembered the works of the Lord, and His wonders of old.

12-13: He meditated on all His work and spoke of His deeds. Your way, Oh God, is in the sanctuary. Who is so great a God as our God (Exodus 15:11)?

14-15: You are the God who does wonders. You have declared Your strength among the peoples. You have redeemed with Your arm (Exodus 13:16). Your people—the sons of Jacob and Joseph. (The redemption of Israel will also occur in the future: Isaiah 48:20).

16:17: The waters saw You, and were afraid. The depths trembled. The clouds poured out water, and the skies sent out a sound. Your arrows (lightening) flashed about. (The time of the Red Sea opening—Exodus 14:21).

The exodus of the redeemed will happen again: Isaiah 51:10-11.

18-20: The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind. The earth trembled and shook. Your way was in the sea. Your footsteps were not known (until later—when one can look back and see what God had done). You led your people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron (Numbers 33:1). Also see Isaiah 43:16-17; 63:11-13.