**The Book of Psalms—Study Guide (Psalms 78-83)**

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 78: A Contemplation (Maschil—a Psalm of instruction) of Asaph.** (See Psalm 32). Soncino titles this Psalm—“Lesson of Israel’s History.”

1-2: These verses are a prophecy of what Jesus would do as well. See Matthew 13:34-35. Jesus revealed more amazing truths (dark/obscure sayings) that were kept secret from the foundation of the world. See Isaiah 48:6.

3-6: See Exodus 13:14. Israel was to teach their children how God delivered them from Egypt. God established a testimony and law that the duty of fathers was to teach their children (See Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7). The succeeding generations were to form an unbroken line of passing along this same knowledge (Psalm 102:18).

7-8: The purpose of the teaching: so that the children would set their hope in God, not forget God’s works, and keep His commandments. They were not to be like their stubborn fathers (Exodus 32:9 and 2 Kings 17:13-16).

9-11: The children of Ephraim, (even though) being armed, turned back (ran away) in the day of battle. They lacked steadfastness in keeping their covenant with God (See Psalm 106:13-14; 24-27).

12-13: God did marvelous things in Zoan, which was an ancient capital of Egypt—in the land of Goshen—where some Pharaohs ruled. (Isaiah 19:11-13). He divided the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16, 21; 15:8).

14-16: God led them by a cloud and by a light of fire (Exodus 13:21-22). God split the rocks and gave them water (Exodus 17:6). He later brought streams out of a rock (Numbers 20:8).

17-20: But Israel rebelled and tested God by asking for the food of their fancy, and even asked if He was able to prepare a table in the wilderness. (See Exodus 16:2-3 and Numbers 11:4-6, 18-20).

21-25: The Lord heard this and kindled a fire against Israel (Numbers 11:1). They did not believe or trust in Him (Numbers 14:11; Hebrews 3:16-19). God rained down manna from heaven (Exodus 16:4) and men ate “angels’ food” (the only place this is cited in the Bible). God sent Israel food to the full (satiation).

26-31: God brought the quail upon Israel via a southeast wind. According to Numbers 11:31, the amount of quail came to about two cubits (three feet) above the ground. Because Israel had yielded to craving, and while the food was still in their mouths, God struck down the choice men of Israel (Numbers 11:33-34).

32-33: In spite of what God had provided, Israel still sinned. They did not believe in His wondrous works. Therefore they lived and died during the 40 years in the wilderness (Numbers 14:11, 34-35).

34-35: Later, when God slew them, the others repented and sought God. They remembered God was their rock and the Most High was their Redeemer (similar wording in Genesis 14:18). This is also future: Hosea 5:14-15.

36-37: Nevertheless, they were not sincere and lied to Him with their tongues. Their heart was not steadfast nor were they faithful to His covenant. (This is also future: Ezekiel 33:31-33; Isaiah 29:13-14).

38-39: But God is always full of compassion and forgiveness. He often turned from His anger (Isaiah 48:9). God remembers we are flesh and that our breath passes away and does not come back again (Psalm 103:14-17).

40-41: Israel often provoked and grieved God in the wilderness (Isaiah 63:8-10). They didn’t believe Him and they limited the Holy One of Israel (Exodus 17:7; Numbers 11:23, 14:22; Isaiah 50:2 and Hebrews 3:16-19).

42-46: They did not remember God’s power nor His wonders in Zoan (Goshen). God turned the rivers and streams into blood (Exodus 7:20-21). He sent swarms of flies (Exodus 8:24) and frogs (Exodus 8:6), and gave their crops to the caterpillar (another word for locust perhaps in the pupa stage) and locust (Exodus 10:12-15).

47-48: God destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore trees (its wood was used for mummy cases) with frost (great hailstones). He gave their cattle and flocks to the hail and fiery lightning (Exodus 9:18, 23-26).

49-51: God cast upon Egypt the fierceness of His anger by sending angels of destruction. He destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus 12:29-30), in the tents of Ham (Mizraim, his son, father of Egypt—Genesis 10:6).

52-55: God made His own people to go forth like sheep, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. He led them on safely to His holy border (frontier), and to the Promised Land which His right hand had acquired. He drove out the nations before them, and allotted each tribe an inheritance by measurement (See Joshua 19:51; 21:43-45).

56-57: Yet they provoked the Most High God. They acted unfaithfully like their fathers (See Judges 2:10-13). They were turned aside like a deceitful bow (from which arrows fail to hit the target—see Hosea 7:16).

58-64: They provoked God and moved Him to jealousy (Exodus 20:4-5). He forsook the tabernacle at Shiloh by delivering His glory (the ark) into the enemy’s hand. (1 Samuel 4:3-4, 10-11). He was furious with His inheritance. Their priests fell and their widows made no lamentation for them (1 Samuel 4:19-22; Job 27:15).

65-66: The Lord awoke as from sleep and like a mighty man beat back His enemies, and put them to a perpetual reproach (1 Samuel 5:1-6, 8-9, 11-12). This occurred also when David defeated the Philistines (1 Samuel 17).

67-69: He rejected the tent of Joseph--namely Ephraim. Instead, God chose the tribe of Judah. (Shiloh was in the territory of Ephraim. The ark was never brought back there, but eventually it came to Jerusalem in Judea: Mt. Zion). See 1 Samuel 7:1; 2 Samuel 6:2, 12. God built His sanctuary (His temple) in Jerusalem.

70-71: God also chose David, His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds (1 Samuel 16:10-13; 2 Samuel 7:8). God brought David to shepherd Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance (2 Samuel 3:18).

72: (A famous verse): So he (David) shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness (understanding with discernment) of his hands. See 1 Kings 9:4-5.

**Psalm 79: A Psalm of Asaph.** (Soncino: This Psalm is one which is recited on the ninth of Ab, the fast day, which is the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. See Jeremiah 39:2). Soncino titles this Psalm: “Prayer in National Disaster.”

1-4: O God, the nations (Gentiles) have come into Your inheritance, and defiled Your temple and have laid Jerusalem in heaps (ruins). Israel became a reproach to those who were around them. (See Psalm 44:13-14).

5-7: How long, Lord? Will You be angry forever? Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You, and on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name (See Jeremiah 10:25).

8-10: Oh, do not remember the former iniquities of our forefathers—see Lamentations 5:7. Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us (See Isaiah 64:8-12). Help us, O God of our salvation. Provide atonement for our sins, for Your name’s sake. Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” (See Deuteronomy 32:43).

11-12: The groaning of the prisoner (Psalm 102:19-21). This is a future event when the captives return to God, and come back to their land—Isaiah 27:13; 49:8-9. Preserve those who are appointed (condemned) to die. And return reproach to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom (folds of a garment used as pockets).

13: God’s people are the sheep of His pasture (Psalm 95:7), and they will give Him thanks forever (Isaiah 43:21). Soncino: “Deliverance will evoke praise….and the solidarity of the nation will be more happily expressed by singing songs, transmitted from father to son, and gathering volume as they flow from age to age.”

**Psalm 80: To the Chief Musician. Set to “The Lilies.”** (“Shoshannim: A direction of the melody to a poem). See Psalm 45. **Testimony of Asaph. A Psalm.** (Soncino titles this Psalm: “Prayer for Israel’s Restoration”).

1-3: God is the Shepherd of Israel. He dwells between the cherubim. Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh were Rachel’s sons—Joseph and Benjamin. (Jeremiah 31:15-17, 20). Verse 3: a chorus line similar to Numbers 6:25.

4-7: How long will God be angry against His people? They were fed with the bread of tears, and tears to drink in great measure. Chorus from verse 3: “Restore us, and cause Your face to shine on us, and we shall be saved.”

8­-11: God caused a vine to come out of Egypt. Nations were cast out by Israel (Genesis 49:22; Isaiah 5:1, 7). The hills were covered (toward the south), and the mighty cedars (toward the north in Lebanon). Her boughs went to the (Mediterranean) Sea (toward the west), and her branches to the (Euphrates) River (toward the east).

12-15: But, God had broken down her (Israel’s) hedges because of their sins (Psalm 89:40-41). A plea for God to look down from heaven and visit this vine, and the vineyard which His right hand planted, and the branch that He made strong for Himself. (Isaiah 63:15, 17-19).

16-19: Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself. (This section refers to King David: see Psalm 89:3-4, but also notice Isaiah 49:5-7, as these verses refer to the return of Christ, who will save Israel). This last phrase is a repeat of the chorus in verses 3 & 7.

**Psalm 81: To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath** (A tune associated with the winepress, vintage songs—Psalm 8)**. A Psalm of Asaph.** Soncino titles it—“A Festival Meditation” (Feast of Tabernacles season).

1-4 Sing aloud to God our strength. Raise a song, strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp and the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the new Moon (Numbers 29:1, at Trumpets), and at the full moon (Leviticus 23:34—Tabernacles), on our solemn feast day. This is a statute for Israel, a law of the God of Jacob.

5: God established this statute in Joseph (Israel) as a testimony, when He went throughout the land of Egypt (Exodus 11:4; 12:41-42), where Israel heard a language they did not understand (see Psalm 114:1).

6-7: God freed Israel’s hands from the baskets and delivered them (Exodus 2:23-25). God answered them in the secret place of thunder (Psalm 18:13-15—through the Red Sea), He tested them at Meribah (Exodus 17:7).

8-10: Hear O My people. There shall be no foreign god among you. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt (Isaiah 43:11-12). Open wide your mouth, and God will fill it (Psalm 103:5).

11-12: But Israel would have none of God (Deuteronomy 32:15-18). So God gave them over to their own stubborn heart to walk in their own counsels. See Romans 1:22-24, 28. (Soncino: “Man is warned that evil is destructive; if he persists in ignoring that truth, God does not hinder his proceeding along the road of ruin.”)

13-14: O that My people would listen to Me (Deuteronomy 5:29). Israel did not walk in the ways of God. He would have subdued their enemies and given them peace. See Isaiah 48:17-19.

15-16: The haters of the Lord (should come cringing) to Him, but their punishment (fate) will endure forever. God fed them with the finest wheat and honey (Deuteronomy 32:13-14; 15-18), but they rejected Him.

**Psalm 82: A Psalm of Asaph.** (Soncino titles this Psalm: “Corrupt Judges Arraigned).

1: God (Elohim) stands (taking up a position) in the congregation of the mighty (El-god). He judges in the midst of the gods (elohim-judges). Soncino: The men who administer justice are consider to be God’s agents. Since they exercise a Godly function, His name is attached to them (see Deuteronomy 1:17; 2 Chronicles 19:5-7).

2-4: The people were judging unfairly and were showing partiality to the wicked (Leviticus 19:15 and Deuteronomy 16:18-20). The judges are to (1) defend the poor and fatherless; to (2) do justice or vindicate the afflicted and needy; to (3) deliver (rescue) the poor and needy. Finally (4) to free them from the wicked’s hand.

5: The unjust judges do not understand. They walk in darkness (morally and intellectually). The foundations of the earth are unstable (moved). Soncino: “human society is undermined when the cause of justice is corrupted.”

6-7: God said, “You are gods (elohim--judges).” Jesus quotes this verse in John 10:34. Since we are children of the Most High (Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 31:9), we must conform to God’s will. We will be judged by what we do.

8: Our prayer should be: “Arise, O God, judge the earth (because human judges are unreliable). You shall inherit (possess) all nations (This is future when Christ returns).

**Psalm 83: A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.** (Soncino titles this Psalm: “National Prayer for Divine Aid”). This Psalm lists the nations in the coalition which will come against Israel in the last days.

1-4: A prayer that God will not stay silent or rest (Psalm 28:1). God’s enemies are about to make a tumult (uproar or clamor), and will have lifted up their head (in defiant arrogance). They have taken crafty counsel against Israel and consulted together to cut them off and that its name may be remembered. This is end time.

5-6: They consulted together with one consent. They form a confederacy (conspiracy) against God. The alliance will include: Edom, Ishmael, Moab (those dwelling in the south and east—all traditional enemies of Israel) and the Hagrites (of Hagar; they lived just east of Gilead on the other side of the Jordan—1 Chronicles 5:10).

7: Gebal (Phoenician city—Ezekiel 27:9), Ammon (Jordan), and Amalek (perpetual enemy—Exodus 17:16), Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre (on the Mediterranean coast—they are hostile to Israel—Amos 1:6-10).

8: Assyria (destroyer of the Northern Kingdom—Isaiah 10:5-6) also joins with them. They have helped (been an arm to) the children of Lot (Moab and Ammon).

9-10: Deal with them as You did with Midian (by Gideon: Judges 7:19-22); Sisera (Jabin’s general killed by Jael: Judges 4:21); Jabin (king of Canaan) at the Brook Kishon who perished at En Dor (Judges 4:24; 5:21).

11-12: Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb (Judges 7:24-25), and their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna (Judges 8:18-21). They had said, “Let us (Midianites) take for ourselves the pastures of God for a possession.”

13-15: Make them as the whirling dust, like chaff before the wind (This is future—Day of the Lord: Isaiah 17:13). As the fire burns the woods, so God will deal with them (See Deuteronomy 32:22-23).

16-18: Fill their faces with shame (humiliation), that they may seek God’s name. May the wicked be confounded and dismayed and be put to shame and perish (Zephaniah 2:10-11). The end result is that all will know God, whose name alone is the Lord, is the Most High over all the earth (Psalm 59:13, Hebrews 8:10-11).

It is at this point that the Psalms of Aspah (including Psalm 50) conclude.