**The Book of Psalms—Study Guide (Psalms 84-89)**

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 84: To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath** (See the introduction of Psalm 8). **A Psalm of the sons of Korah** (See the introduction of Psalm 42)**.** The Korahites were Levites and part of the temple singers—2 Chronicles 20:19**.** Soncino titles this Psalm: “Joy in the Sanctuary.”

1-4: How lovely is Your tabernacle (dwellings). My soul longs (yearns) for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh (mind and body) cry out for the living God. Even as the sparrow has found a home, so too are the altars of God for Israel. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house (temple), where they praise God (see Psalm 65:4).

5-6: Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage (to keep the Feasts in Zion), as they pass through the Valley of Baca (balsam trees, which thrive in a dry waterless valley). However, when the pilgrims passed through toward Jerusalem, they symbolically made it a spring (possibly a real spring too).

7-8: From strength to strength (means any fatigue of walking to Jerusalem does not cause exhaustion) each one appears before God in Zion. (These verses can refer to the second exodus: Isaiah 49:9-13; Jeremiah 31:9-12).

9-12: Look upon the face of Your anointed could refer to David or to Christ. For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand (days, elsewhere). To be a doorkeeper in the house of God is better than to dwell with the wicked. For the Lord God is a sun (a light—Psalm 27:1). Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord of hosts.

**Psalm 85: To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.** (Soncino titles this Psalm: “Prayer of Returned Exiles.”)

1-2: Lord, you have been favorable to Your land. You have brought back the captivity of Jacob (See Joel 3:1-2; Jeremiah 30:2-3, 50:19-20). You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people. You covered (pardoned) their sins.

3-7: God turned from the fierceness of His anger (which came upon Israel for their sins). A prayer that God would cause His anger to cease. Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again? Show us Your mercy, O Lord, and grant us Your salvation.

8-11: God answers: He will speak peace to His people and (even) to His saints. But let them not turn back to folly (sin). Mercy and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed (formed a mutual alliance). Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven (See Isaiah 32:15-18).

12-13: The Lord will give what is good (blessings—in Leviticus 26/Deuteronomy 28), and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before Him, and shall make His footsteps our path (Isaiah 2:3; 58:8, 11-12).

**Psalm 86: A Prayer of David.** (Soncino titles this Psalm “A Cry for Help” and regards this Psalm as a meditation and prayer to be used by any person in a time of trouble.)

1-7: Bow down Your ear, O Lord…for I am holy (godly). Be merciful and rejoice the soul of Your servant. For God is ready to forgive (Exodus 34:6-7), and is abundant in mercy to all those who call upon Him (Joel 2:13).

8-10: Among the gods, there is none like You, O Lord; nor are there any works like Your works (Exodus 15:11; Deuteronomy 3:24; Daniel 3:29). All the nations whom You have made shall come and worship before the Lord, and will glorify His name (Zephaniah 2:11, Revelation 15:4). For You are great, and do wondrous things.

11-12: A prayer for guidance: Teach me Your way, and I will walk in Your truth. Unite my heart (having a singleness of heart) to fear Your name. (A united heart will eventually be given Israel. See Jeremiah 32:38-40).

13-15: A prayer for protection: God is full of mercy. He delivers our soul from the depths of Sheol (grave). At times the proud rises against us, and a mob of violent men have sought our lives. (Similar to Psalm 54:4-7) But God is full of compassion, graciousness, longsuffering, and abundant in truth and mercy (See Exodus 34:6-7).

16-17: Have mercy and give Your strength to Your servant (we are God’s servants). Show me a sign for good, that those who hate me may see it and be ashamed—that You (God alone) have helped and comforted me.

**Psalm 87: A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song.** (Soncino describes this Psalm as prophetic “in the sense that it proclaims the hope of a universal Kingdom of God with Zion as its metropolis…when men irrespective of nationality, will come to themselves and therefore to God.” Hence the title: “Zion the World Centre”).

1-3: His foundation is in the holy mountains (Isaiah 14:32). The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God (selected by God: Psalm 48:1-3; 125:1-2).

4: Rahab (Egypt—see Isaiah 51:9-11), Babylon, Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia (Isaiah 18:7), were nations which warred against Jerusalem. They will eventually be enrolled as citizens of Zion “This one was born there.”

5-6: And of those in Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High Himself shall establish her.” (So, all peoples in the future will be of Zion). Hence, when the Lord will record (shall reckon) or when He registers the peoples, all will be written: “this one was born there.”

7: Both the singers and the players on instruments will say, “All my springs (fountains) are in you.” (Soncino: “Zion will be the sole source of their happiness.” See Isaiah 33:20-21; 35:6-7, 10).

**Psalm 88: A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. To the Chief Musician. Set to “Mahalath Leannoth.”** (Literally “sickness to afflict”—the name of the melody).  **A contemplation of Heman the Ezrahite** (a director of Temple music)**.** Soncino titles it: “A Cry from the Depths” (of despair).Many questions are asked here.

1-5: God of my salvation (He is the only One who can save us), I have cried out day and night (continuously) before You. My soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave (at the point of death). He felt counted with those who go down to the pit, and am like one who has no strength, adrift among the dead.

6-12: Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. You have put away my acquaintances (close friends) far from me. Will You work wonders for the dead? (God’s wonders will not be known in the dark—Ecclesiastes 9:10). Shall the dead arise and praise You? (Psalm 115:17; Isaiah 38:18-19).

13-18: But as for me, I have cried out. My prayer comes to You in the morning (when one wakes from sleep). Why do You hide Your face from me? I am distraught. The troubles came around me all day like water and have engulfed me (like a man drowning). Loved ones and friends are put far from me (see Job 19:13-21).

**Psalm 89: A Contemplation of Ethan the Ezrahite.** (Ethan was a wise man; see 1 Kings 4:31). Soncino titles this Psalm: “Meditation in National Adversity.” Questions from the previous Psalm are answered in this one.

1-2: I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever (The Hebrew word for mercy is “chesed”—God’s acts of love toward Israel—from His goodness. Soncino states that this is the Psalm’s theme). For I have said, “mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.” (2 Peter 3:13—new heavens).

3-4: God made a covenant with His servant David (which is an illustration of God’s faithfulness). His promise was: “Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations” (see 2 Samuel 7:12-16).

5-7: The heavens (angels) praise Your wonders (Psalm 19:1). Your faithfulness (will also be praised) in the assembly of the saints. Who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? See Psalm 113:3-6. God is also to be greatly feared in the assembly of the saints,

8-10: God is to be held in reverence by all those around Him. His faithfulness also surrounds Him. He rules the raging of the sea and stills the rising waves. You have broken Rahab (Egypt) in pieces, as one who is slain (Isaiah 51:9). You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty hand (See Numbers 10:35).

11-12: You founded the world and all its fullness. You have created the north and the south. Tabor (is located SW of the Sea of Galilee. See also Judges 4:6, 14) and Hermon (is located 30 miles SW from Damascus and was the northern border—Joshua 12:1). These two mountains were the most prominent in the region.

13-14: You have a mighty arm and high is Your right hand. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. (Justice is righteousness in practice). Mercy and truth proceed from His face (they attend His presence—meaning they symbolically wait upon Him to obey His commands).

15-18: Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound (Hebrew—“teruah” sounding of trumpets). They walk in the light of Your countenance (Numbers 6:25-26, Psalm 80:19). In Your name they rejoice and in Your righteousness they are exalted. Our horn is exalted (we can raise our heads triumphantly when enemies oppose).

19-20: Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one (possibly referring to Nathan the prophet—2 Samuel 7:4-5, 13-17). David was exalted and chosen from the people—his throne would last. He was anointed with holy oil—see 1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Samuel 5:3. (Verse 19 begins a lengthy quote from God and concludes in verse 37).

21-26: God would establish and strengthen David. The enemy shall not outwit him, nor shall the son of wickedness afflict him. God’s faithfulness would be with him. His territory would be from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. He shall say, “You are my Father, my God and the rock of my salvation” (see 2 Samuel 22:47).

27-29: I will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed and throne as the days of heaven. (David will be Israel’s king in the millennium, but Christ also, as a descendant of David, will have an everlasting throne as well).

30-32: If David’s sons forsake God’s law and don’t walk in His judgments, and break His commandments, then they will be punished for their transgressions. (Quoted from 2 Samuel 7:14).

33-35: Nevertheless, God’s lovingkindness will not be taken from him, nor will allow His faithfulness to fail. God will not break (profane) His covenant, nor alter the word that has gone out from His lips. God has sworn by His holiness. He will not lie to David. See Jeremiah 33:19-22.

36-37: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun. It shall be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky. This is referring to Christ—a descendant of David. See Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:32-33.

38-40: But You have cast off and abhorred and have been furious with Your anointed (in this case, God’s nation of Israel). You have renounced the covenant and have broken down all his hedges. (This happens as a result of Israel’s sins—Leviticus 26:30-33, etc. culminating in “Jacob’s trouble”—Jeremiah 30:7).

41-45: All who pass by plunder Israel. God will exalt the right hand of his adversaries, and will not sustain Israel in battle. His glory as a nation will cease and his throne will be cast to the ground (Once, during the time of Nebuchadnezzar and then later the last remaining monarch in David’s line at the time of Christ’s return).

46-48: How long, O Lord, before You will deliver? Remember how short my time is (Psalm 90:9-10). What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his own life from the power of the grave? (Only God can redeem one from the grave with a resurrection. See Psalm 49:15; Hosea 13:14).

49-51: A final plea for the Lord to extend His former loving kindnesses, which He swore to King David in His truth. God’s servants have been reproached: “Remember God, the enemies who reproached Your anointed.”

52: Blessed be the Lord forevermore. Amen and Amen. (This is the conclusion of Book Three. These are similar words which concluded Book One—Psalm 41:13, and Book Two—Psalm 72:18-19).