



WITH STUDY
COMES
GROWTH

THE-BOOK-OF PSALMS



CONTEXT

A BIBLE STUDY JOURNAL

MEANING

THIS GUIDE TO THE BOOK OF
PSALMS PROVIDES CONTEXT,
KEY SCRIPTURES, AND A PLACE
TO JOURNAL. READ THE BOOK
OF PSALMS FOR YOURSELF AND
WRITE DOWN ANYTHING YOU
THINK GOD MIGHT BE TRYING TO
TEACH YOU.

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WHAT IS IT?

Psalms is the all-time, greatest hymn and prayer book. “Psalmoi” are praises sung to musical accompaniment. The Book of Psalms has a huge variety of emotional expression as real people in history reflect on who God is and what he’s done. Most psalms were used in communal worship of the nation of Israel but have also been used by followers of Christ—individually and collectively—in every generation for its richness and depth in guiding prayer and worship.

WHY IS THIS BOOK IMPORTANT?

It gives a snapshot of Biblical theology, history, and worship, all in one place from creation to the rescue from slavery to the failure of kings to the Messiah and God’s promise of full restoration. Psalms is a place where God’s unfolding story meets the real lives of actual believers who are trying to make sense of it all. It teaches us how to approach God in emotional, intellectual, spiritual honesty.



WHO WROTE IT?

There are many authors within the Book of Psalms. Some are anonymous, but we know that David wrote approximately half of them—perhaps more. Here's the count of how many psalms were written by *named* authors.

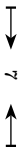
DAVID	73 WITH HIS INSCRIPTION (+ 2 MORE IDENTIFIED AS HIM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, SO 75 TOTAL)
SONS OF KORAH	10
ASAPH	12
SOLOMON	2
HEMAN	1
ETHAN THE EZRAHITE	1
MOSES	1
ANONYMOUS	48

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

Psalms was written over a 1000 year period beginning with Moses and ending with Judah's return from captivity in Babylon around 430 BC. David's reign as king (1010–970 BC) was the high point of prayer and praise in the nation of Israel and David is universally regarded as the quintessential psalmist, authoring about half the psalms during this period.

OUTLINE/ORGANIZATION:

In the original Hebrew Bible there are no numbers of Psalms, just the larger divisions of five smaller “books” within the whole of the Book of Psalms. The identity and timing of the collector of this book is debated by scholars—as well as the reason for collecting them into these particular smaller books. While there are some themes present in historical timing around each book (noted below), each defies any airtight explanation for particular thematic collections. There are a lot of theories out there! If you look carefully you will find the conclusion of each “book” has a similar refrain of *“Let the Lord be praised forevermore Amen and Amen!”*



OUTLINE/ORGANIZATION (CONT'D):

BOOK 1:
PSALMS
1-41

BOOK 2:
PSALMS
42-72

WRITTEN WHILE DAVID WAS KING, BOOKS 1 AND 2 INCLUDE THE MAJORITY OF DAVID'S PSALMS, BUT 18 APPEAR SCATTERED THROUGH OTHER BOOKS.

BOOK 3:
PSALMS
73-89

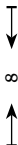
THERE IS NO KINGSHIP OPERATING IN ISRAEL DURING THE TIME OF MOST OF THESE PSALMS. MORE CALLS FOR REPENTANCE APPEAR THROUGHOUT.

BOOK 4:
PSALMS
90-106

MANY OF THESE PSALMS WRITTEN WHILE ISRAEL WAS IN EXILE—OUT OF THE LAND AND NO KING. ISRAEL'S HERITAGE IN MOSES IS RECALLED MORE IN THIS BOOK, AND IT ENDS WITH PRAYER FROM THOSE IN EXILE (PSALMS 106:47).

BOOK 5:
PSALMS
107-150

THIS BOOK BEGINS WITH THE REJOICING OF RETURNING EXILES. MANY OF THESE PSALMS WERE WRITTEN WHEN ISRAEL WAS BACK IN THE PROMISED LAND AND THE FULFILLMENT OF THE COVENANT OF DAVID SEEMED POSSIBLE ONCE AGAIN.



KEY THEMES:

- ▶ PSALMS 1 & 2 ACT AS A SORT OF INTRODUCTION TO THE TWO MAJOR THEMES FOUND THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE BOOK OF PSALMS.
- ▶ PSALM 1 IS A "WISDOM PSALM" THAT ESTABLISHES THE THEME OF CONTRAST BETWEEN THE ONE WHO ABIDES BY THE LAW (THE HEBREW TORAH) VS ONE WHO DOES NOT.
- ▶ PSALM 2 IS A "ROYAL PSALM" THAT LOOKS FORWARD TO THE HOPE OF THE MESSIAH, LARGELY BASED ON DAVIDIC COVENANT. THIS THEME IS ESPECIALLY PROMINENT THROUGH BOOKS 1 & 2. THIS PSALM WAS SUNG AT THE CORONATION OF EACH NEW KING OF ISRAEL HOPING FOR THE ULTIMATE KING—THE COMING MESSIAH.

BOOK STRUCTURE:

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF PSALMS IN THIS BOOK?

Psalms are poetic in nature and must be read accordingly. The form of Hebrew poetry found throughout this book is close to an ancient form called Ugarit, which was very developed among people throughout the geographic region of Canaan. There are various, identifiable types of psalms which include:



BOOK STRUCTURE (CONT'D):

PRAISE

SEE EXAMPLES IN PSALMS 8, 29, 33, 50

Praise is everywhere in the book of Psalms, but many psalms are entirely dedicated to it. The Hebrew word 'halel' is often seen in/above these psalms. Praise is always public, communal, and loud! Thanksgiving psalms are included in this as psalms of the praise of remembrance.

LAMENT

SEE EXAMPLES IN PSALMS 3, 7, 13, 44, 60, 137

These psalms plead to God for him to intervene in some sort of crisis or problem. Even though they often feel desperate they also contain praise and reminders of the strength and capabilities of the Lord. There are many corporate or communal laments as well as individual.

MESSIANIC

SEE EXAMPLES IN PSALMS 2, 18, 22, 36, 68

These psalms anticipate the arrival of the promised Messiah. Some are clear, explicit prophecy and others are shadowed references. All establish themes of the Messiah from elsewhere in scripture such as being in nature God, his rejection, his kingly triumph, etc.

BOOK STRUCTURE (CONT'D):

PILGRIM (ASCENT/DESCENT)

SEE EXAMPLES IN PSALMS 120–134

Songs sung during travel to/from Jerusalem for festivals of Israel.

ALPHABETICAL

SEE EXAMPLES IN PSALMS 9, 25, 37, 110

Acrostic psalms where each verse begins with a different letter of Hebrew alphabet.

WISDOM

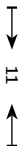
SEE EXAMPLES IN PSALMS 1, 10, 73, 127

These psalms have a core purpose of imparting understanding. There is some overlap with praise psalms, but many have an inscription of “maskil” meaning “for instruction or understanding.”

IMPRECATORY/JUDGMENT

SEE EXAMPLES IN PSALMS 7, 35, 52, 109

Psalms that ask for God’s justice to prevail, especially for judgment to fall upon enemies. These are the cries of a victim—not of a bystander with an opinion. Some are shockingly vehement and violent. All are raw and real.



USE THE PSALMS TO HELP YOU PRAY

CREATE YOUR OWN PSALM:

There are (loose!) “formulas” in how these psalms are written. Follow it and write one of your own as a way to connect with God.

Choose the type that best fits your current situation and emotion. God can handle wherever you are and whatever you’ve experienced and felt about him and his unfolding story.

Get in there, be honest and express yourself in prayer through a modern, personal psalm.

► PRAISE:

GIVE A PUBLIC CALL FOR PEOPLE TO JOIN YOU IN PRAISE.

TELL WHY YOU'RE EXCITED TO PRAISE HIM

PRAISE THE PERSON OF GOD WITH YOUR OWN DESCRIPTION OF WHY HE'S AMAZING.

(AND/OR) PRAISE THE WORKS OF GOD WITH A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT HE'S DONE THAT'S SO GREAT

ADD THANKSGIVING FOR OTHER TIMES GOD HAS WORKED IN YOUR LIFE

RESTATE YOUR DESIRE TO PRAISE HIM WITH YOUR HEART/LIFE/BODY/MOUTH.

CREATE YOUR OWN (CONT'D):

► LAMENT:

STATE YOUR PLEA DIRECTLY TO GOD FOR HIM TO INTERVENE

DESCRIBE YOUR EMOTION/LAMENT/DESPERATION

CONFESS YOUR TRUST IN GOD

MAKE AN ASK, TELL HIM WHAT YOU WANT HIM TO DO

LOOK FORWARD TO THE GOOD RESULT

VOW TO PRAISE HIM

► ALPHABETICAL / ACROSTIC:

TAKE A SECTION OF THE ALPHABET (OR A WORD INSTEAD IF YOU LIKE!) AND WRITE A POEM ABOUT AN ASPECT OF FAITH OR A LIFE FOLLOWING THE WAYS OF GOD.

► IMPRECATORY / JUDGMENT:

CALL FOR GOD'S JUSTICE IN A MATTER THAT TOUCHES YOUR LIFE

ADMIT YOUR OWN PASSIONATE EMOTIONS AS VICTIM OF AN INJUSTICE

CALL FOR THE JUDGMENT OF GOD HOWEVER YOU WANT TO SEE IT, TELL HIM WHAT YOU REALLY WANT

RELEASE ULTIMATE JUDGMENT TO HIS WAYS AND MEANS AND TIMING

CONFESS HIM AS THE ONE WHO BRINGS REPENTANCE AND ULTIMATE JUSTICE IN CHRIST

— **REWRITE A PSALM:** —

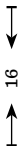
Choose any psalm and rewrite it in your own words. Don't worry about "getting it right," just allow God to use your words to connect with him in a new and different way.



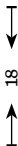
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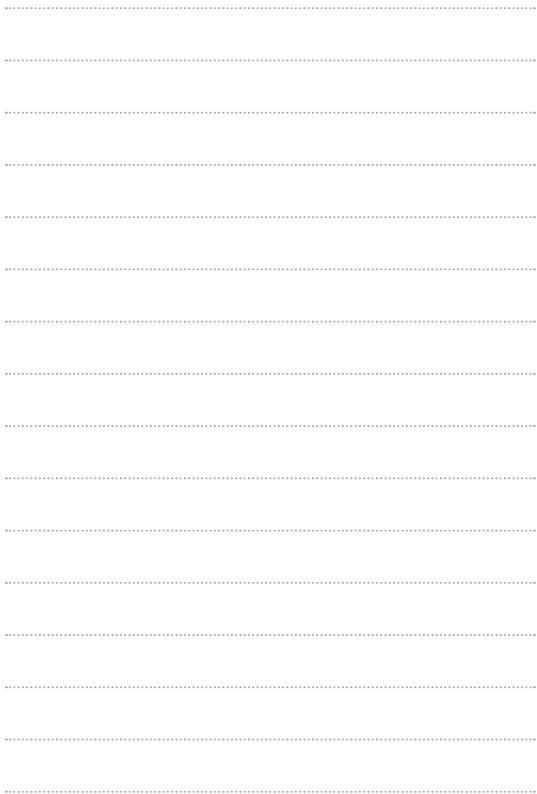


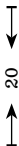
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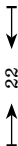


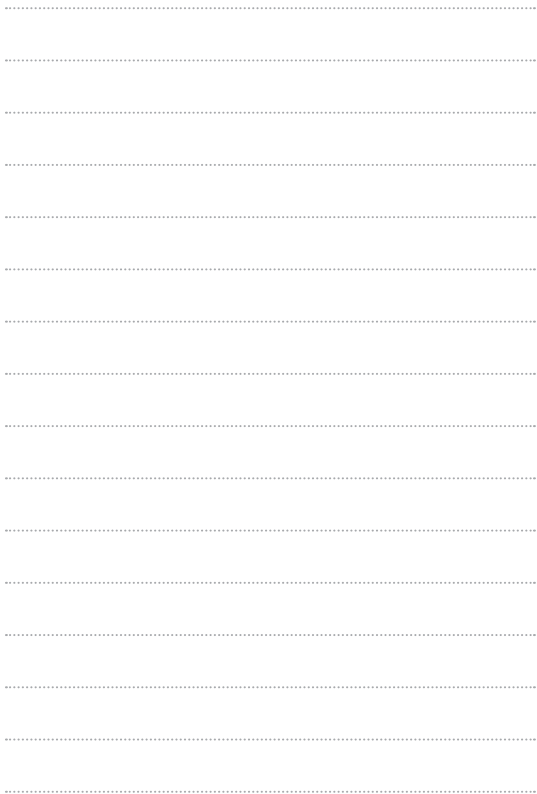


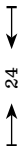


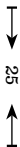


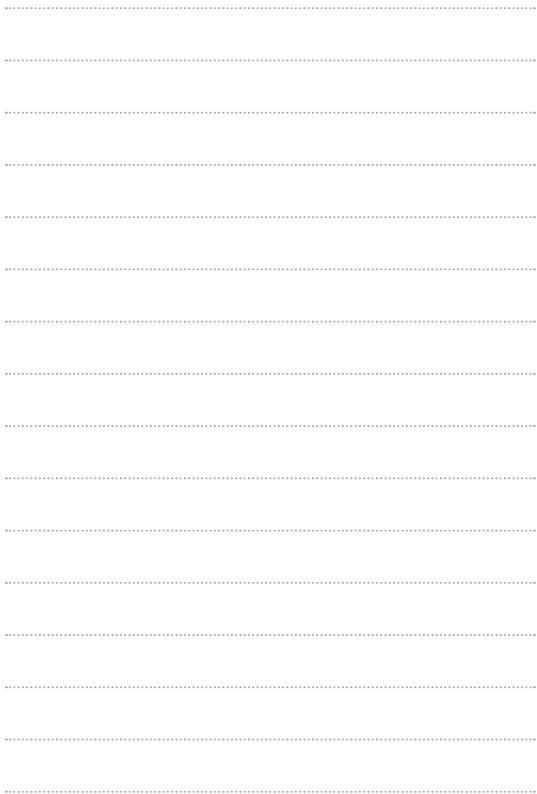


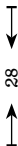


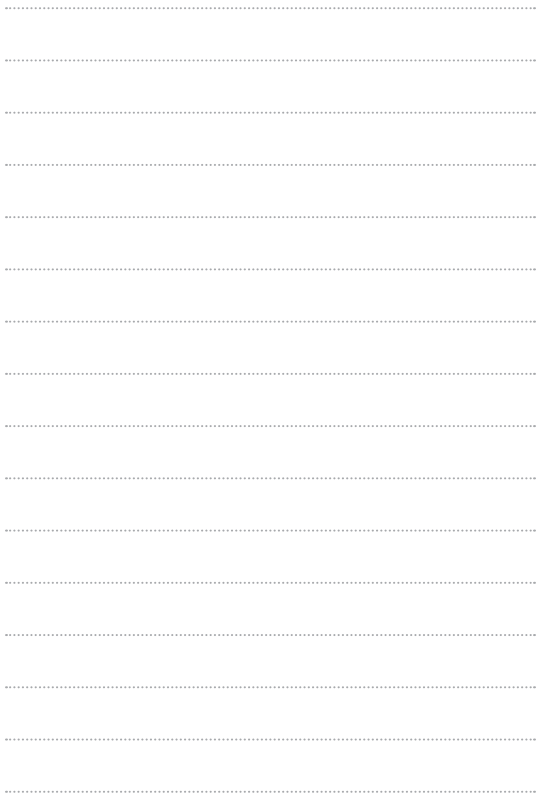




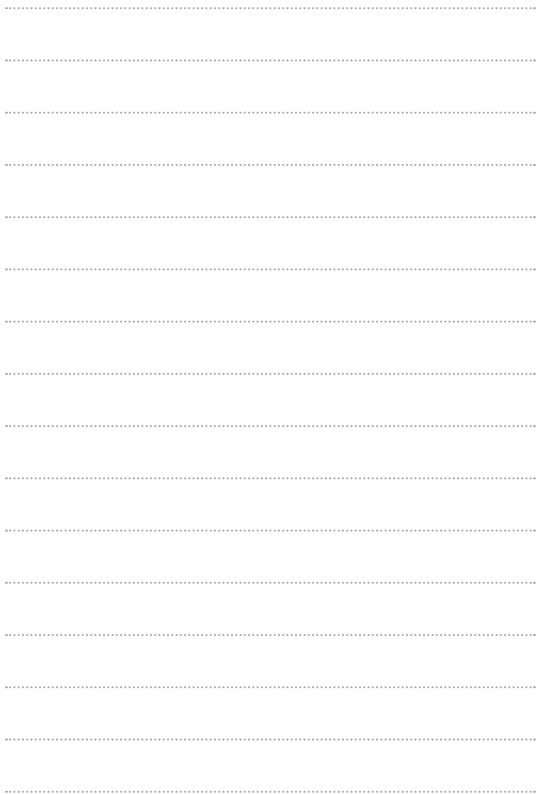




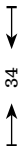








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CINCINNATI, OHIO

