

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Tehillium, "Praises" which is commonly referred to as the book of Psalms. The title is derived from the Greek translation Psalms; meaning "instrumental music". "The words accompanying the music". This book is a collection of 150 religious lyrics of Israel.

Psalms were composed by different authors including king David, Solomon, Moses, Ezekiel, Jeremiah among others. The book of Psalms is full of hymns and prayers used by the people of Israel in worshipping God both at home and in exile.

The following are the Psalms considered in this paper/syllabus;

1. Psalms 2(A royal Psalm used at enthronement/coronation).
2. Psalms 20(A royal Psalm asking for victory).
3. Psalms 22(A personal Psalm for suffering and a cry of anguish and praise)
4. Psalms 47(Gods supremacy and future king).
5. Psalms 137(National Lament for destruction of Jerusalem and the temple).

Importance of the Psalms in Israel.

Examine the purpose of the Psalms in Israel.

Examine the role of the Psalms in the life of the Israelites.

(UNEB 2007)

- They were used as a means of seeking for blessings from God in form of good harvest, military victory.
- They were formed as part of Israel's worshiping style.
- They were used for the intention of seeking a response from God towards their enemies in times of disgrace.
- They were used for repentance and asking for forgiveness from the Lord.
- They used Psalms to identify themselves as chosen people/divine nation.
- They were used to appreciate God's provision.
- To ask God to punish their enemies.
- A call to God to respond to their prayers.
- To acknowledge God as the great king.
- They were meant to teach children about the heritage and history of Israel.
- To show their inner gratitude to Yahweh.
- To express their love to God.
- To show/illustrate the future of Israel. Deborah's prophetic Psalms.
- To express their feelings to God.
- Sung as a national anthem. Psalms 47.
- To portray God's character.
- To show that Yahweh is above other gods.
- Used to celebrate important days i.e Passover.
- To show the universality of God.
- Helped people to understand that suffering is part of life thus they didn't have to lose faith in God.

- They were used to offer counseling and guidance to Israelites.
- Enlightened people more about the works of Yahweh.

Account for the use of Psalms in Israelit worship.

SUMMARY

- To seek for blessings
- Worship of Yahweh
- To get a response
- Repentance/atonement
- Divine nation
- Appreciate
- Punish enemies
- Answering prayer requests
- Acknowledging Gods kingship
- To teach children
- Inner gratitude
- To show love
- Show Israels future
- To express feelings
- Gods character
- National anthem
- Gods universality
- Faith despite suffering
- Counseling/guidance
- Enlight Yahwehs works

PSALMS 2 (Gods chosen king)

Discuss the major themes in Psalms 2(1997).

What is the message in Psalm 2? (1996)

Give a summary of the teaching of Psalm 2.

1. It was used during the enthronement of kings.
2. It was a pre-exile song composed during a time when kingship was still important in Israel.
3. The kings could be installed with approval of God.
4. The Psalms brings out the kings duties which were greatly emphasized.
5. Shows that the king was expected to be loyal.
6. The Psalm had a messianic prophecy in which the son of God was believed to be Jesus who would have might power.
7. The Psalms confirmed that Israels king had to be chosen by God following the peoples tradition.
8. The king would be anointed and was to work as the servant of the lord.
9. The kings coronation would be presided by the priest and judges in Jerusalem temple.
10. The enthroned king would be invisible. Whoever would revolt against him would not succeed.

11. The Psalm gives warning to the neighbouring nations that their attempt to invade the appointed king would be a direct attack to God.
12. The king would be expected to seek Gods wisdom as they were believed to rule on Yahwehs behalf.
13. The king was to rule following the covenant faith which was the constitution for Israel.
14. The nation that would attack Israel would be defeated.
15. The kings power would never be challenged as the lord would be watching him.
16. The king would glorify Gods name by expanding Israels boundaries.
17. God warned the king not to disappoint him as he was expected to be humble and loyal to the lord.
18. The Psalm reveals the universal nature of God. All other kings worldwide would pay their respect to the king of kings.
19. The Psalter even presents the king as the sum of God. He decreed and then had begotten him.
20. Royal Psalms reveal Gods presence among the people and his future worldwide empire is celebrated.
21. The worshippers commemorate the glorification of Yahwehs kingship and with celebration of king David whose dynasty is to last forever.
22. He concludes by assuring that blessed are those who put their trust in the lord and cursed as those who dont put their trust in the lord.

PSALM 20(Prayer of Victory)

"Psalm 20 is sometimes called a prayer of victory. Comment(1998)
Discuss the background and message of Psalm 20. (2000).

1. This is a royal Psalm and a prayer of victory. The Psalter gives background or war whereby he prays for Gods help to protect the king.
2. He continues to pray that the lord hears them in the days of trouble.
3. He adds that the name of the God of Jacob should defend him. He protected Jacob and promised to bless and protect his descendants. Therefore he could not abandon his grandchildren.
4. The Psalter cries out to the lord to send help from the sanctuary and give him victory over his enemies.
5. The king offers sacrifices offsprings praying that the lord could accept them and lead him to success.
6. He adds that the lord should grant him wisdom and counsel.
7. The people lacked forward and were anxious to shout with joy when victory is finally granted.
8. The people are seen asking God to be on their side as he used to be on the side of their ancestors.
9. The Psalter expresses his confidence in the lord who gives victory to his chosen king.
10. With confidence, he adds that they trust the power of the lord their God while some trust in their war chariots and others in horses.
11. The Psalm shows that with faith and trust put in God he would never betray his chosen king.

12. The king would for sure be assured of victory.
13. The people are urged to pray for the king with unweaving faith.
14. It brings out all the qualities of God as a warrior, a war lord and cannot abandon their king at such time.
15. All people were encouraged to be obedient to the king rather than any earthly power.
16. The Psalm emphasizes that without the help of God, the Israelites were not strong enough to take the strength of their enemies.
17. In this Psalm other nations are mocked because of their trust in large armies they had.
18. The people promised that when God would grant them success they would give him praise.
19. The Psalter concludes by begging God to give victory to the king and answer their plea.

- A prayer for victory
- Prays for Gods protection in trouble
- Asks the God of Jacob to protect them.
- Cries for Gods help from the sanctuary/
- The king offers sacrifice.
- Asks for Gods wisdom and counsel.
- People wanted to shout with joy for victory.
- Asked God to be on their side.
- Exposes unwavering confidence.
- Said that they trust only God.
- God wouldnt betray his chosen king.
- The king would be assured of victory.
- To pray for the king.
- Bring out all the qualities of God – War lord, warrior.
- Encouraged to be obedient to the king of kings.
- God was their strength-couldnt defeat ...enemies without his help.
- Other nations are mocked- they trust in chariots and large armies.
- They promised to praise God for victory.
- Begged Gods answer the kings prayers.

Comment on the view that Psalm 20 is prayer for victory.

LESSONS DERIVED FROM THE PSALM

1. Comment on the view that Psalm 20 can be of significance to Christians today.
2. How can the message in this Psalm be of use to Christians today? 1998

It is important to Christians today because they also find themselves at

times in similar situations.

1. Pray to God
2. Donate to God in churches
3. ask favour from God
4. Put their trust in God
5. Openly express their joy
6. Pray for leaders
7. Show patriotism
8. Give thanks to God
9. Seek genuine protection
10. Should be proud of their historical background
11. Should share achievements
12. Have hope.
13. Allow God to work for them
14. Set aside national importance
15. Should be exemplary
16. Put God at the fore front

PSALM 22(A cry of anguish and song of praise)

Discuss the message in Psalm 22

This is a psalm expressing personal or individual supplication of suffering. The Psalter brings out a man who painfully suffers. In spite of his virtuousness, he feels God has deserted him. This he begins his prayer by asking God why he had deserted him.

1. He then shows his desperate cry for help. However, the lord seems not to care, for he would have answered.
2. He callus upon God day and night but still God does not answer.
3. The Psalm acknowledged God as being holy and the one being praised by the Israelites.
4. The Psalter complained that the people cried out to God, trusted him and he saved them.\
5. The Psalter disowned his manners and considered himself a warm and scorned at by everyone.
6. They laughed at him that he relied on God but he does not save him. They ask why the lord does not save him if he loves him.
7. He compared his situation with a condemned criminal exposed to public laughter.
8. He was not sure that the lord would save him fro suffering.
9. He expressed his total reliance and God from his childhood.
10. He cried out that the lord should not desert him when trouble is near.
11. He felt that his strength was gone like water poured on the ground that all his bones were off their joints.
12. He felt the lord had left him to die in dust.
13. He shows that his enemies surround him like a herd of bulls and a pack

- of dogs.
14. They glare at him gloating and dividing his garments.
 15. He calls upon the lord to rescue him noting that he was helpless before his enemies.
 16. He observed that he would praise the lord before the assembly.
 17. He observed that he would tell the people what the lord had done for him.
 18. He stressed that the lord would always be with the poor and never to ignore those suffering.
 19. He promised to offer sacrifices to the lord and also to feed the poor.
 20. He stressed that all nations would turn to the lord for help.
 21. He observed that the future generation of Israel would service the lord faithfully.
 22. All prosperous nations and kings would bow down before him.
 23. All generations would praise his great name.

How Psalm 22 fits in the personality of Jesus.

Show how the psalmist fits in the personality of Jesus.

1. Jesus cried to God in the garden of Gethsemane Ps 22:20, Mk 14:36.
2. Jesus was jeered by the people and mocked him Ps 22:32, Mk 15:31.
3. Jesus felt he was weak because he was suffering.
4. Jesus called upon the father to take away the cup of suffering.
5. He acknowledged that everything was possible with God.
6. Jesus was made/faced to take sour wine.
7. He was crucified with two evil bandits Psalm 22:16, Luke 23:32
8. They gambled Jesus clothes Ps 22:18 Matt 27:35.
9. Jesus was spit on.
10. Jesus was rejected by his own people.
11. They argued that he (Jesus) relied on the lord, why doesn't he help you. Ps 22:8, Matt 27:40.
12. Jesus said: "MY God why have you forsaken me". Ps 22:1, Mark. 15:34.

PSALM 47(SUPREME RULER)

What is the message in Psalm 47(1993). Explain the main teachings of Psalm 47 1996

This is one of the Psalms that celebrate the fact that God is the king and lord overall. It is in the same category as Psalms 93 and 95 to 99. The Psalter calls upon people to worship God with joy (clans hands and shout loud praise) and with reverence. It carries the following message:

1. The psalmist presents God as the supreme king.
2. The psalmist shows that God came down in great power and might to save his people.
3. He refers to God as the most high to be feared.
4. He praises the lord and acknowledges his greatness
5. He acknowledges/portrays God as the source of victory.
6. Portrays God as the source of power and the most powerful.
7. He acknowledges Gods love towards Israel(Jacob) and the provider of the land they acquired.
8. The ascended lord is supreme and sovereign.
9. He is exalted and all people must gather to him.
10. Show that God has a throne and there are shouts of joy and blasts of trumpets.
11. He presents the fact that God is exalted above all creatures.
12. The psalmist calls upon people to sing praises to God.
13. Shows the universality of God as a kings of the earth belongs to God.
14. Acknowledges Abraham as the ancestor of the Israelites.
15. The rulers of the nations assemble before God together with others.

PSALM 137(NATIONAL LAMENT FOR DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

Explain the message in Psalms 137

This is a psalm of collective supplication or lamentation. In this psalm, the nation of Israel laments in exile because of the destruction of their temple and city have it is a prayer revenge.

1. This was an exilic psalm sung by the Israelites after they had been captured by the Babylonians.
2. The psalm is related to the destruction or the Jerusalem temple by the Babylonians.
3. They were mourning for the beauty of their city Zion which was demolished and their property was looted.
4. In this psalm, the people expressed their sorrow and grief.
5. They remembered the grief that befell them when Jerusalem was destroyed.
6. They felt oppressed and mistreated by the captors.
7. They hanged their harps on the tree branches by river Tigris or Euphrates and ceased to play them.
8. Their captors kept mocking them to sing a song of Zion.
9. They felt their God had to be only praised in the temple thus refused their captors orders.
10. They felt that the lord had completely abandoned them.
11. They were feeling tormented that they had to sing and make their captors happy.
12. They pleaded to God, reminding him of what the Edamites did to them as they

shouted to tear Zion to ground.

13. The people of Israel were in disgrace because of being captivated by a pagan nation.
14. The people also wanted God to revenge on their enemies for making them suffer.
15. The Israelites noted the Babylonian and desperately waited to see them suffer.
16. They felt they had lost their honour and pedigree because of being captives.
17. The Psalter remembered the arrogance of the Edomites against them.

Revision Question

Explain the reason for bitterness and hatred expressed in Psalm 137.

Account for the bitterness of the psalmist in Psalm 137.

- a) Discuss the relevance of Psalm 137 to the Israelites in exile.
- b) Examine the importance of this psalm to Christians today. (UNEB 2006).

Explain the reasons for bitterness and hatred expressed in Psalm 137.

Discuss the circumstances that led to the development of Psalm 137.

1. They were mistreated by the Babylonians while in exile.
2. They remembered the arrogance of the Edomites against them.
3. Their captors had told them to sing unwillingly.
4. They were forced to sing about God and Zion in a foreign land.
5. Their captors were just mocking them about God.
6. Their hopes of returning to their land had not been affected.
7. They were in a hot situation that almost made them forget Jerusalem.
8. They had left their nation and the most fertile land.
9. They were taken to a pagan nation.
10. Their captors told them to entertain them by singing.
11. The situation in exile was not conducive for them to play their harps.
12. They remembered the arrogance of the Edomites.
13. While in exile they remembered Zion and crept.
14. The Babylonians had done what the Edomites had done i.e capturing and destroying Jerusalem.
15. The Lord had not yet punished by God for taking them in exile.
16. They had left their nation and the most fertile land.

PSALM 137 AS A REFLECTION OF REPENTANCE

In what ways is the message of the Psalmist in 137 a reflection of Israel's

repentance?

1. The psalmist shows that the Israelites sat down beside river Tigris or Euphrate and wept as a sign of broken heart repentance.
2. Their psychological torture reminded them of their sin thus reflected their readiness to reconcile.
3. By remembering the fall of Jerusalem, they showed commitment to shun a postacy hence a sign of repentance.
4. The objection to the demands of the captors signified their wish to ally with Yahweh, this revealed a spirit of repentance.
5. Their refusal to sing and amuse their captors is an indication of refusal to commit the sin.
6. They insisted on forgetting their skills in music, which was a step towards repentance.
7. The absence of Jerusalem meant the absence of Yahweh hence yearned for God which is a sign of repentance.
8. Their pride of Jerusalem and the temple though they were fallen, showed their sense of nationalism.
9. The Israelites could not forget their city Jerusalem and their temple hence had their Yahweh in mind.
10. Their need for the temple and Jerusalem provoked I them the earlier prophetic notice and importance of exile in order for them to repent.
11. Their defiance against their captors when they demanded them to use their harps to praise them also showed their commitment to their religion.
12. Their reflection on Zion, where they worshipped God was a sign for their captor that they remembered their God.

RELEVANCE OF THIS PSALM

Explain the lessons Christians can draw from psalm.

- Christians should find joy in God other than other things.
- They should trust God against all odds.
- They should feel proud of what they believe.
- Christians should learn to have God as their ally.
- They should use musical instruments to sing for God.
- Learn to yearn for Gods presence of worship.
- Learn to feel grieved over their sins.
- Should have a broken heart when they go wrong.
- Should accept sufferings they go through because of their sins.
- Should learn to reconcile with God.
- Should seek Gods protection.
- Should cry out to God when in trouble.
- Should forgive their enemies.

JESUS TEACHING REGARDING OUR ENEMIES

Jesus teaches the following on this subject; Should...

- ❖ Reconcile with them
- ❖ Forgive
- ❖ pray for them
- ❖ sympathize with them
- ❖ eat with them as Jesus had a meal with Judas.
- ❖ Leave vengeance to God
- ❖ Settle their disputes
- ❖ Live in harmony
- ❖ Be merciful
- ❖ Be humble
- ❖ Be tolerant
- ❖ Preserve human life