

Summary Handout

“Let Every Thing That Hath Breath Praise the Lord”

Lesson
25
Summary

Psalms; No book of the Old Testament is more Christian in its inner sense or more fully attested as such by the use made of it than the Psalms. Out of a total of 283 direct citations from the Old Testament in the New, 116 have been counted from this one book. Much of Christianity by its preference for the Psalms reverses the custom of the Synagogue, which judged the psalmists' inspiration inferior to that of the prophets, and set Moses on high above them all, so that no prophet might teach any new thing but only what was implicitly contained in the law.

Seventy-three of the psalms are ascribed to David, and so it was natural that the whole collection should be referred to as his, and that this convenient way of speaking should give rise in time to the popular belief that “the sweet psalmist of Israel” himself wrote all the so-called Psalms of David. (Bible Dictionary)

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Scriptures—Important Part of Jewish Life: There are normally three days a week when the first five books of the Bible, the “Torah,” known as the Law, are read. Every congregation, whether Orthodox, Conservative or Reform reads the same Torah section on Mondays, Thursdays and Sabbaths (Saturdays). There are additional readings on High Days such as Yom Kippur, Passover, Sukkoth, Rosh Hannah, Shavuot, etc. In addition to reading the Torah segments, additional readings from the “Neviim,” the Prophets, and the “Ketuvim,” their writings, are added. Over the years, these additional readings have been added to assist in explaining the Torah portion being read.

Forbidden: At one time in history, approximately 150 B.C., the foreign occupying government of the Greeks and Syrians forbade the Jews to read the Torah, so they began reading the Psalms, part of the Ketuvim, instead. Nowadays, selected Psalms and other writings of the Old Testament constitute a regular part of daily Jewish reading.

Singing the Scriptures and Prayers: It should be noted that reading scriptures and praying are to be done in a singing or chanting way to differentiate the common everyday sounds of the mouth with the Word of the Lord or words to the Lord. A pattern of singing has developed that puts emphasis on particular syllables and words. When a boy has a Bar Mitzvah, he is accompanied by a person who may prompt him to sing his words correctly while making sure that his clothing, cap, robe, sash, etc. is worn correctly. Singing is a festive part of many Jewish occasions. Many times, the Eastern Jews (Sephardic) and Western Jews (Ashkenazi) sing the same lyrics with their own ethnic music and intonation.

The following selections from the *Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.* give a wonderful background on the Psalms:

Lyric Poems: “PSALMS - the first book of the *Ketuvim* section of the Bible, constituting an anthology of lyric poems universally recognized as the foremost collection of Hebrew religious poetry. The English name "Psalms" is derived from the Greek word for a "song sung to a stringed instrument" while the Hebrew name, *Tebillim*, is derived from the root meaning praise and glorification. The Hebrew title characterizes the book in terms of its essential contents --- a collection of profoundly religious poems of praise to God --- while the English title characterizes it in terms of its form: lyric poems designed for elaborate musical accompaniment.”

Reading Psalms along with Torah: “The Psalter, as the work is often called in English, contains 150 Psalm-chapters, divided into five books, each of which, except the last, concludes with a doxology, or formulaic hymn of praise to God. This division seems to represent successive stages in the composition of the work as a whole, in such a way that the final crystallized form of 150 reflects a cumulative edition of what were once separate collections. The five-fold arrangement was apparently chosen in conscious duplication of the five books of the Pentateuch. It may have been the result of the reading of the Psalms week by week in association with the Torah readings.”

David Authorship: “Traditionally, authorship of the book of Psalms has been ascribed to King David. 73 of the 150 Psalms begin with the superscription *le-David*, although the precise connotation of this term is uncertain; it could mean "concerning David" or "a dedication to David" and not necessarily "by David." Furthermore, of the remaining Psalms, many bear superscriptions relating them to ten other figures of early Israelite history, ranging from Adam to Moses. However, the association of King David with Psalms rests on strong, ancient traditions. Moreover, in other books of the Bible David appears as a skillful player on the lyre, as an inventor of musical instruments and as a composer of dirges, and is described in one place as the "sweet singer of Israel."

Earliest Israelite Literature: “Some evidence further suggests that King David organized guilds of Psalm singers in the Tabernacle (I Chronicles 6:16), which were certainly functioning during the period of the First Temple. The fact that the names of some of these groups (the "Korahites" and the "Asaphites") appear in the superscription of various psalms, indicate their strong involvement in the early public worship of Israel. Bible critics today (unlike those of 100 years ago) almost all agree that the Psalms represent a very early form of Israelite literature, bearing no Hellenistic influences and thus predating, at the very latest, early Second Temple times.”

Most Widely Read: “The Psalter contains an unusual variety and complexity of literary forms, including hymns, laments, prayers of thanksgiving and didactic poems of various sorts. Within it are to be found both deeply personal lyrics, reflecting the solitary confrontation of the individual with God, and poems written from the perspective of the community as a whole, reflecting the combined concerns of all Israel. The Psalms thus reflect a large array of specific situations in the life of the individual and the community and offer profoundly moving and deeply religious formulations for those seeking religious expression. It is for this reason that the Psalms has become the best-known and most widely-read portion of the Bible, not only in the original Hebrew but in all the many languages into which the Bible has been translated.”

Some Read Psalms Completely Daily: “The great popularity of the Psalms can be judged from the fact that most large prayer books contain the Psalms in their entirety, and that special *hevrot tehillim*, societies for the recitation of Psalms, exist in many parts of the world. In Jerusalem, two separate groups recite all of the Psalms daily at the Western Wall.”

Daily Prayers Include Psalms: “In the liturgy, readings from the Bible play a prominent role. The *Shema* as well as the Song of Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea are central to the daily morning service, and the prayers are studded with various selections from the Book of Psalms as well as verses from other Books.”

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available FREE at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

(1) a short e-mailed WEEKLY REMINDER

(2) a one-page two-sided SUMMARY HANDOUT (plus a “PDF” version for printing)

(3) the COMPLETE SUPPLEMENTAL MANUAL LESSONS. All are available FREE at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com

You may copy and print the information from any of the website versions to distribute to your class members and friends.