

## LESSON 25: One Bible, One Word



REFERENCE

Page 293 – 295 [DISCOVERING PATTERNS IN THE BIBLE]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (1)(2) Bibles
- (2) LSM: 'Discerning Patterns in the Bible'
- (3) Suggestions from the Teacher's Note

### AIM

- To help learners discern what gives the Bible a sense of unity or cohesion.

### OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners identify patterns and themes that give the Bible a sense of unity and cohesion.

### TEACHER'S NOTE

#### BACKGROUND

*The Bible is both a selection and an arrangement of books – both give the Bible a sense of cohesion. Here are a few ways in which this sense of cohesion can be explored:*

- The arrangement of the books in the Christian Bible to suggest coverage of the whole of the earth's history from beginning to end – from the story of creation in Genesis to the vision of a new heaven and a new earth in Revelation.*
- One strong tradition of Christian interpretation of the Bible (obviously not shared by those of the Jewish faith) is that the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament.*
- This can be seen in the messianic expectations that emerge in parts of the Hebrew Bible – which Christians understand as being fulfilled in Jesus Christ (although Jewish people still await the Messiah).*
- It can also be seen in themes such as the establishment of a covenant between God and people – first between God and the people of Israel (this relationship with the Jewish people continues), later extended to the Gentiles and those who become Christians in the form of a new covenant through Jesus Christ.*
- In the Hebrew Bible, two large blocks of narrative carry the stories, history, and religious practice of the people known as Hebrews, and then Israelites – Genesis to Deuteronomy (known as the Torah or Law to Jewish people; biblical scholars also refer to this as the Pentateuch); Joshua, Judges, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings (sometimes referred to by biblical scholars as the Deuteronomist History). More historical narrative is also carried in two smaller blocks of material – 1&2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.*
- Some biblical texts can be read as commentary on other texts – e.g. Psalm 119 is a meditation on the Law and Psalm 104 a meditation on God's act of creation; Psalms 105 and 106 carry reflection on Israel's understanding of God's actions in their history, God's response to their cries for help and God's faithfulness, despite the Hebrew/Israelite/ Jewish people's acts of disobedience and rebellion; 1&2 Chronicles reappraises the reigns of Israel's kings and offers a contrasting view to 1&2 Samuel and 1&2 Kings.*
- The writers of the New Testament quote from many of the writings of what Christians came to call the Old Testament – thus these writings functioned as scripture for them. (But remember, the processes that led to the establishment of the Christian and Jewish canons of Scripture, Bible and Tanak, respectively, still had some way to go.)*

*Some motifs occur across the Bible – you can use a concordance to trace some of these, but one example is the injunction to love God and to love neighbour, or the connection between loving God and loving neighbour (and 'aliens' and 'enemies'). Here's a sampling of these references: e.g. Leviticus 19:18, 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19, 11:1; Matthew 5:44ff, 19:19, 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27 (but in relation to 10:25-37); Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8; 1 John 4:7ff and 4:20-21.*

## LESSON OUTLINE

### 1 From Beginning to End

Ask the learners to find the contents page of the Bible, and to browse through the entries. Ask them the following question: What do you notice? Does it give you any sense of the Bible's unity? Let them explore this briefly, noting whatever they come up with.

(The most obvious observation would be that the list begins with Genesis, the book that describes how all things have come to be, and ends with Revelation, which gives a picture of how all things fulfill their end or destiny.)

### 2 Characters and Their Relationship

- iii. Divide the learners into small groups, and allocate to each group one of the following Scripture stories, which you may have covered, or intend to cover, in the Education by Story process this year (See CORD p 264-5):
  - David and Goliath [1 Samuel 17:1-54]
  - The Three Men in the Furnace [Daniel 3]
  - Daniel in the Lions' Den [Daniel 6]
  - The Temptations of Jesus [Matthew 4:1-11]
  - The Ten Lepers [Luke 17:11-19]
  - The Woman Caught in Adultery [John 8:1-11]
  - The Conversion of Saul [Acts 9:1-19]
- ii. Ask the groups to read the story, taking note of the characters and their relationships.
- iii. Distribute the Lesson Materials page 'Discerning Patterns in the Bible'. Ask them to study the model in Part A and then see if they can apply it to the story they have read. Can they identify A, B, and C?
- iv. Take some feedback from the groups and discuss the usefulness of the model.

### 3 Conclusion

Conclude by returning to the discussion at the start of the lesson where the learners suggested various factors that give the Bible a sense of unity. Expand on this by picking up one or two of the suggestions (a) – (h) in the Teacher's Note for this lesson.

---

## OTHER IDEAS

### 4 Tracing Themes

Another exercise that will develop the learners' sense of the Bible's drift is the tracing of key themes. See CORD p 295 (top of the page) for some possibilities.

### 5 Passive and Active

Explore the suggestion in Part B (bullet 1) of the Lesson Materials page that Scripture's 'passives' (suffering ones) emphasise God's rescuing activity.

### 6 Levels of Interpretation

Select a passage of Scripture and help the learners apply the five levels of interpretation listed in Part B (bullet 2) of the Lesson Materials page.

## MATERIALS

### LEARNER

- Michael Burke. 1991. 'A pattern in the Bible's stories' 124 in Connections. Pietermaritzburg: Centaur Publications, p 132
- Michael Burke. 1991. 'The Bible – some points to consider' 125 in Connections. Pietermaritzburg: Centaur Publications, p 132



## Lesson Materials



# Discerning Patterns in the Bible

## Part A: A pattern in the Bible's Stories

The characters:	A:	the just, caring, fatherly God that the Hebrews get to know as Yahweh
	B:	whatever is of death: sin, injustice, unawakeness & complacency, fetters ('to be held is to be helled')
	C:	God 's beloved, the people he calls to imitate him, notably in the passionate pursuit of Justice
Their relationship:	A → B	C overcomes B for the sake of C

© Michael Burke. 1991. 'A pattern in the Bible's stories' 124 in Connections. Pietermaritzburg: Centaur Publications, p 132

## Part B: The Bible – Some Points to Consider

- the way that Scripture 's passives emphasise God 's rescuing activity (see, for instance, the Beatitudes, the comments on Jesus 's crucifixion and resurrection, and the accounts of the Exodus and the Exile)
- the fact that, because the Biblical authors were not always conscious of all that God would communicate through their words, various levels of interpretation are possible:
  - + the intended meaning of the Biblical author
  - + the literal meaning of the words
  - + the personal meaning it may yield to the reader
  - + the 'typical' meaning: a person or event seen as foreshadowing a future person or event
  - + the 'fuller' meaning, often symbolic, and perceived in the context of the Bible as a whole...

© Michael Burke. 1991. 'The Bible – some points to consider' 125 in Connections. Pietermaritzburg: Centaur Publications, p 132

## LESSON 26: Thorny Issues in the Bible



REFERENCE

Page 294 [DISCERNING PATTERNS IN THE BIBLE]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) LSM: 'What's the Message?' (See Teacher's Note)
- (2) 'Drift' in Scripture (CORD p 294)
- (3) Bibles

### AIM

- To help learners realise that Scripture passages are best interpreted with regard to the ethical orientation of the Bible as a whole.

### OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners understand that Scripture passages need to be read in relation to the Bible as a whole, with regard to their literary style and historical-cultural context.
- KUI Learners understand that difficult texts should not distract us from God's call to practice justice and love in our relationships with others.

### TEACHER'S NOTE

The Lesson Materials Page 'What's the Message?' needs to be prepared before the lesson. Make enough copies so that each group of 4/5 learners will get one. Cut each copy into a number of random pieces (about 10) and place these in a packet/envelope for the group. Put the heading 'What's the Message?' on the outside of the envelope.

#### BACKGROUND

*The basic ethical 'drift' in the Bible can be seen in the injunctions to love and justice. A concordance will provide a wealth of references – some of these with regard to love of God and neighbour (and 'alien' and 'enemy') are listed in the Teacher's Note of Lesson 1. But there are a number of passages in the Bible that throw up difficult questions, particularly with regard to what they suggest about God and the ways people sometimes try to demonstrate their faithful obedience to God. Some of these texts are listed below. It's worth being familiar with them, and to have thought about your response to them, as they may be offered as examples by learners.*

*Genesis 22*

*Genesis (25: 19-34) 27:1-40*

*Judges 11:1-11; 29-40*

*Judges 19:16-25*

*1 Samuel 16:1-13*

*2 Samuel (3:6-11) 21:1-14*

*2 Samuel 11:1-18, 25-27*

*Acts 5:1-11*

*Abraham nearly sacrifices his son*

*Rebekah and Jacob steal Esau's birthright*

*Jephthah's terrible vow*

*The Ephraimite's hospitality and his daughter's terror*

*God plots a coup and tells Samuel to lie*

*Rizpah, a bereaved concubine who shames King David*

*King David arranges the death of Bathsheba's husband (But see further 2 Samuel 12:1-25; 1 Kings 1:1, 11-40; 2:13-25; 1 Chronicles 3:5)*

*Ananias and Sapphira – a homily on truth?*

*There are no easy answers to texts like these – long known as difficult to generations of Jewish and Christian readers. But St. Augustine, perhaps picking up on the basic ethical drift of the Bible in relation to the Christian affirmation that God is love, and that we are called to love God and neighbour, suggested that Christians use this as the key to interpreting scripture. In this sense,*

*Christian interpretation of the Bible must be guided by what gives life, what affirms life, what makes life better for all.*

*However, difficult texts can help us to reflect on relationships, the society we live in, and the way power is at work in these. So, when approaching texts like these, it's worth considering questions such as these:*

- *What can we learn about social relationships and power from these stories – between God and people, kings and subjects, parents and children, men and women?*
  - *Can we match any of these examples with our contemporary experience? In our own lives? In the lives of others caught up in difficult personal, social, and political circumstances?*
  - *Have we ever misunderstood the will of God, even as we sought faithfully to serve God?*
  - *Have we ever brought pain and destruction into our relationships with others – perhaps through misunderstanding or an abuse of power?*
  - *What steps have we tried to take towards healing – of ourselves, of our relationships?*
  - *What in social relationships, particularly between men and women, parents and children, rulers and subjects, has changed for the better? What more still needs to change?*
  - *What can we do to build good relationships with others? What characteristics do we need to avoid? What characteristics do we need to practice?*
- 

## **LESSON OUTLINE**

### **1 Puzzle**

- i. Divide the class into groups of 4-5 learners
- ii. Hand out a puzzle envelope to each group. (See Teacher's Note)
- iii. Ask them to put the puzzle together.

### **2 Class Discussion**

- i. Open a discussion with the learners on the sentence that runs across the puzzle. ('The Bible must be seen as a whole.') Ask them how they interpret it.
- ii. Share with them the idea of a 'drift' in Scripture, using the analogy of a river proposed in CORD page 294.

### **3 Thorny Issues**

- i. Awareness of such a drift enables one to tackle the "sticky issues" that the Bible presents. They are "sticky issues" because:
  - Of the objectives with which they were written
  - Of mythical tradition
  - Of the cultures of the people writing them
  - Of the context in which they are interpreted
  - They are sometimes interpreted out of the full context.
- ii. Discuss each of the key phrases on the puzzle.
  - *The apple in the story of creation:* Genesis 3 mentions "fruit", not an apple
  - *Creation in 7 days:* The Bible makes no scientific statement regarding the duration of the creation process.
  - *40 days of fasting:* 40 is a number used symbolically. It is possible that it was not 40 days that Jesus fasted for. We can interpret that it was a long time. The important point is that he fasted to prepare for his public ministry. The same principle applies to the 40 years in the desert.
  - *My God my God why have you forsaken me?* Jesus was quoting the first line of Psalm 22, and the custom of quoting a first line was a Jewish way of referring to the whole Psalm. (See CORD p 294.)

Now open discussion to class and see if there are any other “thorny issues” that the learners may bring up. Share ideas. Offer to research any answers that you do not know or get the learners to research.

---

## OTHER IDEAS

### 4 Abraham and Isaac

Take this story [Genesis 22: 1 – 19] or any of the others listed in the Teacher’s Note. In what way does the command of Yahweh to sacrifice Isaac become a thorny issue? Invite the learners, after reading the story reflectively, to apply the five levels of interpretation given on the Lesson Materials page from Lesson 1: ‘Discerning Patterns in the Bible’.

### MATERIALS

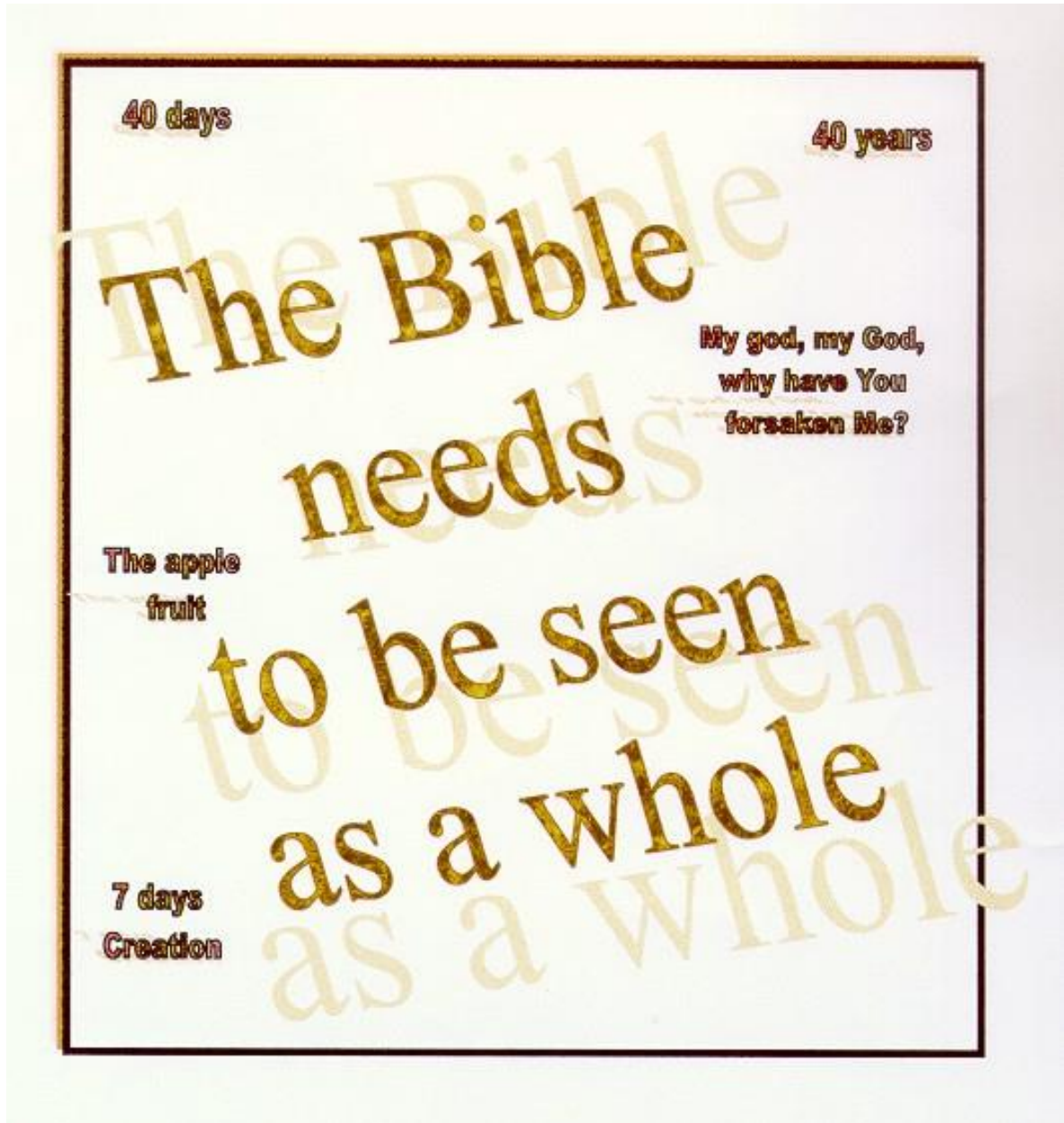
#### LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. ‘What’s the Message?’



Lesson Materials

What's the Message?



## LESSON 27: Biblical Touchstones



REFERENCE

Page 294 [DISCERNING PATTERNS IN THE BIBLE]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) Bibles
- (2) LSM: 'Biblical Touchstones'

---

### AIM

To help learners recognise the drift of the Bible more clearly through compiling their own list of Biblical Touchstones

---

### OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners identify a personal meaningful Scripture passage.
  - EXP Learners personalise this Scripture passage and take meaning from it.
- 

### TEACHER'S NOTE

Before this lesson, ask learners to think about and to find a passage in Scripture that is meaningful to them. They should come to the lesson with a personal or borrowed Bible. (Have a collection of Bibles for those learners who are not able to provide one.) It would be a good idea to role model what you expect your learners to do. Tell them you will be doing the same reflective exercise and then join them for it. Do not get involved in any other activities or distractions.

---

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### 1 Introduction

Explain the sequence that the lesson will follow. Impress upon the learners that the lesson has a strong personal dimension. Encourage them to use it as "time out" from a busy schedule and indulge themselves in growth time with God.

#### 2 Experience

Distribute the Lesson Materials page 'Biblical Touchstones'. Make sure that every learner has a Bible. Give the following directions:

- Find a quiet place, away from distractions, where you feel comfortable. This may be somewhere outside of the classroom.
- Find a passage in the Bible that has special meaning for you. A guideline is that it should not be more than 10 verses. Even one verse may be sufficient.
- Relax in an upright position and centre yourself on what you are about to do. Let go of what is happening around you.
- Read their passage slowly 2-4 times.
- Close your eyes, sit quietly with the passage, being open to God's Word. What is God saying to you today through this passage?
- Complete the work page reflectively. You will not have to share your thoughts with anyone unless you would like to. Your work page will remain private.
- Return to the classroom 5 minutes before the end of the lesson.



### 3 Conclusion

Thank the learners for their discipline. Ask if anyone would like to share any comment. Do not pressurise anyone into saying anything. If they do comment, thank them for sharing. Do not judge or evaluate their comments. Let God do the talking.

---

## OTHER IDEAS

### 4 Journalling

Share the idea of journaling their journey with God in a private book or diary. They can write their thoughts or what they feel God is saying to them. (The questions they answered may be one way of keeping thoughts in their journal.)

### 5 Touchstones

One way to help the learners clarify for themselves the Bible's 'drift' is to have them compile their own lists of biblical touchstones. This is what Jesus did when he picked out Dt 6:5 and Lev 19:18 and combined them into what we call 'the greatest commandment' (Lk 10:27) - which of course is a fine starting-point for the learners' lists. Other sample quotes that would give them an idea of what to look for can be found in **CORD**, p 294.

## MATERIALS

### LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. 'Biblical Touchstones'



Lesson Materials



# Biblical Touchstones

Bible reference e.g. 1 Kings: 3 – 5

---

What was the passage about? Key points

---

---

What is God saying to me?

---

---

Note any significant points that you would like to remember from this time. Be creative, using any kind of expression you like, such as graffiti, drawing or symbol. Or you may choose simply to write a few sentences.

## LESSONS 28: The Psalms



REFERENCE

Page 295 [DISCERNING PATTERNS IN THE BIBLE]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (1)(2) TSM: “The Book of Psalms’
- (1)(2) Bibles
- (2) LSM: ‘Psalms Now’
- (3) A4 paper
- (3) CD player/tape recorder
- (3) CD or Cassette

### AIM

- To explore the Book of Psalms as a way of distilling Israel’s spiritual experience, and hence, the overall direction of biblical literature

### OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners identify Psalms as the ancient prayer book of the Israelite people.
- DAP Learners appreciate the Book of Psalms by attempting to compose their own personal psalm.

### TEACHER’S NOTE

One way to help learners tune into the Bible’s wavelength is to have them dip into the Psalms. The 150 psalms put into prayer form the history, beliefs and feelings of the Israelites. As background to this lesson, read **CORD** p 295 (middle bullet). Further information can be found on the Lesson Materials page ‘The Book of Psalms’.

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### 1 The Book of Psalms

Each learner requires a Bible for this lesson. Ask them to find the book of Psalms and to skim through the headings. Pose the following questions, and discuss them briefly:

- What are psalms?
- How is the Book of Psalms organised?
- Why is this book in the Bible, do you think?

#### 2 Reading the Psalms

Ask learners to browse through the Psalms a second time, and choose a couple they feel like reading. Sometimes the language and images are quite difficult for contemporary readers, so you might like instead to distribute the Lesson Materials page ‘Psalms Now’ which contains a few psalms in a more modern and free translation. Share some of the background of the Psalms. Ask the learners to choose 2 or 3 Psalms randomly and read through them. Invite learners to share their reading experience.

#### 3 Composing a Psalm

- i. Hand out an attractive sheet of A4 paper to each learner.
- ii. Ask them to write their own psalm. It could be a psalm of praise and worship, a plea or a thanksgiving, or any other kind. If needs be, they can use one of the psalms they read as a model. Assure them that their psalms will be kept private if they do not wish to share them. Play some soft instrumental music for inspiration, as learners are busy writing.

#### 4 Conclusion

- i. Ask learners how they responded to the experience. Suggest to those who enjoyed the experience that they write more and keep journals of their prayers.
  - ii. Ask them if anyone would be willing to have their Psalms either read or put up on display. They may write their names on it or keep it anonymous. These psalms could be displayed somewhere prominent in the school if the learners are willing to share.
  - iii. End the lesson by thanking them for responding.
- 

### OTHER IDEAS

#### 5 Composition of the Psalms

Give learners some background concerning the composition of the Psalms. For a long time they were all attributed to David, but this is highly unlikely due to a number of good reasons. See the Lesson Materials page 'The Book of Psalms'.

#### 6 Psalm Groupings

The psalms may be divided in different ways:

- The Psalter, or Book of Psalms, is divided into five books, in imitation of the Torah or Pentateuch. Learners can discover this by paging carefully through the Psalms, and noting the doxologies at the end of Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106, and 150.
- The Psalms can be grouped according to themes. Three are psalms of praise, psalms of thanksgiving, wisdom psalms, royal psalms, and lament psalms. Ask learners to find an example of each of these types.

#### 7 Historical Psalms

Some psalms narrate the history of Israel. Learners look up and read Psalms 78 and 105.

#### MATERIALS

##### TEACHER

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms> (extracts)

##### LEARNER

- Leslie Brandt. 1973. *Psalms Now*. St. Louis: Concordia (extracts)



## Lesson Materials



# The Book of Psalms

### Composition

The Book of Psalms is divided into 150 Psalms, each of which constitutes a religious song or chant, though one or two are long and may constitute a set of related chants. It is incorrect to speak of these as chapters, since their individuality antedates by at least 1500 years the division of the other books of the Bible into chapters

Traditionally all the Psalms were thought to be the work of David, but many modern scholars see them as the product of several authors or groups of authors, many unknown. Most Psalms are prefixed with introductory words (very different in the Masoretic and Septuagint traditions) ascribing them to a particular author or saying something about the circumstances of their composition; only 73 of these introductions claim David as author. Since the Psalms were written down around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, nearly half a millennium after David's reign (about 1000 BC), they doubtless depended on oral tradition for transmission of any Davidic material.

Psalms 39, 62, and 77 are linked with Jeduthun, to be sung after his manner or in his choir. Psalms 50 and 73-83 are associated with Asaph, as the master of his choir, to be sung in the worship of God. The ascriptions of Psalms 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87, and 88 assert that the "sons of Korah" were entrusted with arranging and singing them; 2 Chronicles 20:19 suggests that this group formed a leading part of the Korathite singers.

### Selections of the Book

The Psalter is divided, after the analogy of the Pentateuch, into five books, each closing with a doxology or benediction:

- i. The first book comprises the first 41 Psalms, all of which are ascribed to David except 1, 2, 10, and 33, which, though anonymous, were also traditionally ascribed to him. While Davidic authorship cannot be relied on this probably is the oldest section of the Psalms
- ii. Book second consists of the next 31 Psalms (42-72), 18 of which are ascribed to David and 1 to Solomon (the 72nd). The rest are anonymous.
- iii. The third book contains 17 Psalms (73-89), of which the 86th is ascribed to David, the 88th to Heman the Ezrahite, and the 89th to Ethan the Ezrahite.
- iv. The fourth book also contains 17 Psalms (90-106), of which the 90th is ascribed to Moses, and the 101st and 103rd to David.
- v. The fifth book contains the remaining Psalms, 44 in number. Of these, 15 are ascribed to David, and the 127th to Solomon.

Psalm 136/...

## Lesson Materials

BOOK OF PSALMS (cont)

- Psalm 136 is generally called "the great Hallel." But the Talmud includes also Psalms 120-135. Psalms 113-118, inclusive, constitute the "Hallel" recited at the three great feasts, at the new moon, and on the eight days of the Feast of Dedication.
- Psalms 120-134 are referred to as Songs of Degrees, and are thought to have been used as hymns of approach by pilgrims.
- Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm. It is composed of 176 verses, in sets of 8 verses, each set beginning with one of the 22 Hebrew letters. Several other Psalms too have Alphabetical arrangements.
- Psalm 117 is the shortest Psalm, containing but two verses.

### Use of the Psalms in Jewish Ritual

The Mosaic ritual set out in the books of the Pentateuch or Torah makes no provision for the service of song in the worship of God. The earliest references to the use of singing in Jewish worship are in relation to David, and to this extent the ascription of the Psalms to him may express a general if not a specific truth.

Some of the titles given to the Psalms in their ascriptions suggest their use in worship:

Some bear the Hebrew designation *shir* (Greek ode, a song). Thirteen have this title. It means the flow of speech, as it were, in a straight line or in a regular strain. This title includes secular as well as sacred song.

Fifty-eight Psalms bear the designation (Hebrew) *mizmor* (Greek psalmos, a Psalm), a lyric ode, or a song set to music; a sacred song accompanied with a musical instrument.

Psalm 145, and many others, have the designation (Hebrew) *tehillah* (Greek hymnos, a hymn), meaning a song of praise; a song the prominent thought of which is the praise of God.

Six Psalms (16, 56-60) have the title (Hebrew) *michtam*.

Psalms 7 and Habbakuk 3 bear the title (Hebrew) *shiggaion*.

Psalms are used in traditional Jewish worship. Several Psalms appear as part of the morning services; Psalm 145 (commonly referred to as "Ashrei," which is really the first word of each of the last 2 verses of Psalm 144), is read during or before services, three times every day. Additionally, at the eve of the Sabbath, various Psalms are read in the pre-Sabbath service ("Kabalas Shabbos").

Traditionally, a "Psalm for the Day" is read after the morning service each day. This is described in the Mishnah (the initial codification of the Jewish oral tradition) in the section "Tamid."

When a Jew dies/...

## *Lesson Materials*

### BOOK OF PSALMS (cont)

When a Jew dies, a watch is kept over the body and Tehillim (Psalms) are recited constantly by sun or candlelight, until the burial service. Historically, this watch would be carried out by the immediate family – usually in shifts – but what usually happens today is that the funeral home or Chevra kadisha will offer someone to keep this vigil.

Many Jews complete the Book of Psalms on a weekly or monthly basis, and say, each week, a Psalm connected to that week's events or the Torah portion read during that week. In addition, many Jews (notably Lubavitch, and other Chasidim) read the entire Book of Psalms prior to the morning (Shachris) service, on the Sabbath preceding the calculated appearance of the new moon.

The 116 direct quotations from the Psalms in the New Testament show that they were familiar to the Judean community at the time of Jesus.

© <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms> (extracts)

## Lesson Materials



### Psalms Now

## 21

O God,  
in the grace and strength that You daily grant,  
Your servant finds reason for celebration.  
You have truly fulfilled his innermost longings.  
You have responded to his deepest needs.

He asked for security,  
and You encompassed him with love.  
He looked to You for life,  
and You granted him life eternal.  
He sought for identity,  
and You adopted him as Your son.  
Whatever is of value and worth in his life  
has come by way of Your rich blessings.  
His heart is glad in the realisation  
of Your eternal presence.  
He knows that he will never lose Your love.

I raise my voice in praise, O God,  
because no one can separate me from You.  
Though circumstances threaten me  
and my own obsessions entangle me,  
You will never let me go.  
Your great power is sufficient to set me free  
from these things that hurt my soul.  
If I put my trust in You,  
You will not allow them to destroy me.  
I find so many reasons for praising You, O God.



Lesson Materials  
PSALMS NOW (cont)



## 26

I am about to make an important decision, Lord,  
and the day before me is charged with uncertainty.  
Enable me to sense Your presence,  
to feel Your undergirding power,  
to be assured of Your guiding concern.

I have been Your son and servant for many years.  
Even in my youth I claimed Your redeeming love  
and dedicated my life to Your purposes.

Until now I have shunned the world's enticements,  
the human ambitions that so teasingly beckon,  
to pursue Your objectives  
and carry out Your commands.

I have been faithful to the hour of worship  
and the time of prayer.  
I have celebrated Your grace and sung Your praises.  
My dearest friends are those who love and serve You.

Now, O Lord, I have come to a fork in the road.  
I don't know which way to turn.  
I commit this day into Your hands.  
I pray that it may be lived by Your direction  
and in accord with Your will.

I raise my voice in thanksgiving, O God,  
for You have granted me the assurance  
that You will guide my faltering steps.

Lesson Materials  
PSALMS NOW (cont)



47

Clap your hands, stamp your feet!  
Let your bodies and your voices  
    explode with joy.  
God is not some human concoction.  
He is for real! And He is here!  
Despite all attempts  
    to rationalise Him out of existence,  
He is in our world,  
    and He reigns over our universe.

The rulers of nations often ignore Him.  
Men of learning often pass Him by.  
The masses of His creatures substitute  
    their own little gods in His place  
    and worship the things they can see and feel.  
There are others who build fortresses  
    about themselves  
    and manifest no need for God.

Our great God will not be ignored.  
He will not remove Himself from our world.  
Let us recognise His presence  
    and fill the air with His praises.

Lesson Materials

PSALMS NOW (cont)

140

O God, deliver our nation and our world  
from those men in positions of authority  
who resort to violence  
to carry out their objectives.

They sweet-talk us into believing  
they are acting in our interests,  
and brainwash us into blind,  
flag-waving allegiance,  
until we march by their side  
into bloody wars that decimate and destroy  
our brothers and sisters  
in the family of man.

Deliver all of us, O Lord,  
from the notion that anything of value or worth  
can be obtained by hostile or violent actions.

Our God is on the side of those who are afflicted.  
He will justly deal with men of violence,  
and show His mercy upon the victims  
of their obscene actions.

Help us, O Lord,  
even at the risk of our lives and well-being,  
to overcome hate with love  
and to be peacemakers in a world  
that is so racked and distorted  
by the atrocities of war.