

## Day 119 Psalms 8, 9, 16, 19, 21, 24

### Psalms of Joy in God

The knowledge of this God of Creation provokes joy and celebration like nothing else. The words the Psalmists use are rich in expression, movement, music and song – all of those things which make man unique in his creativity.

#### Psalm 8

Addressed to the director of music, this is a Davidic song accompanied by the Gittite harp or instrument.

v.1 An exclamation of wonder at the scope of God's ability and influence. How wide, how expansive (Heb אָדִיר *adir* from root *adar*, to expand or be great) is His Name, that is, the mark of the Maker imprinted on His works. For all that modern anti-theists seek to efface the acknowledgement of the Creator from the universe, the order and wisdom inherent in His world gainsay the suggestion of an accidental beginning.

v.2 Even children inherently respond to the wonders around them in giving glory to the One who made it all. God has given to their lips the innocent expression of thanks to confound and silence those who rubbish the Lord's sovereignty. In Matthew 21.16, Jesus quotes this verse to the Priest and Scribes who are complaining of the simple praise He is receiving from them as He enters Jerusalem. God has made it so.

v.3-8 One pictures the Psalmist standing under the night sky, and being overwhelmed by its beauty and its greatness, recognising that it is all 'the work of His fingers', and then wondering that God should be interested in this pin-prick of a being, man, to whom He has given spirituality, understanding and rule over all the earth and its creatures.

v.9 The Psalm ends with the singer repeating the opening exclamation, of amazement and wonder.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2608.mp3>

#### Psalm 9

This Davidic Psalm is addressed to the director of music, and, at face value, is to be sung to a melody 'On the Death of the Son.' However, it may be that the Hebrew should be read to say 'concerning mysteries for the Son'; it is not a material issue which should be of concern, though.

There are suggestions that this Psalm was originally joined with Psalm 10 to form an 'acrostic' Psalm (such as Psalm 119 is.) This means that each stanza begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is not discernible easily from the two psalms, although it may have some ancient basis.

Certainly, Psalms 9 and 10 in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament are given as one Psalm, leading to an alteration in the numbering system from here on in the Greek Bible.

v.1- 6 The singer is full of praise because God has vindicated him against his enemies.

The words used are full of expression; the word ‘praise’ in verse 1 is Hebrew *yadah* (Heb יָדָה , deriving from the word for the hand, *yad*; thanks and praise in Hebrew are linked to movements of the hand – raising, stretching out.

The word in verse 2 for be glad is *samach* (Heb סָמַח) meaning to be joyful, merry, and the verb used for rejoice is *alatz* (Heb אָלַץ ) which means to jump for joy. The word for sing praise is *zamar* (Heb זָמַר) which means to play an instrument. Thus, the Hebrew understanding of praise engages all the emotions and expressions. It is not a cerebral exercise for the Jew to praise.

v.7 – 10 The Lord is the *right-wiser* of the world, the judge of all things, and a refuge for those who otherwise would be denied justice.

v.11 – 12 A second call to praise Him for His justice and His vindication.

v.13-16 There is a momentary call by the singer for justice from the Lord, so that He may emerge the more praised when His enemies are discomfited, snared by their own wrongdoing.

Verse 16 is followed by a *selah* pause for musical reflection, but also with a term *higgaion* (Heb חִגְּאִיּוֹן from the root, *hagah* meaning to murmur.) It perhaps indicates for the musician to play in a more definite way, with more feeling.

v.17-20 The vindication of God means that the godless will not triumph, while those dependent on God’s favour will be given hope. The Psalm ends with a cry for God to intervene to establish His rule, and a closing pause for musical effect.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2609.mp3>

## **Psalm 16**

This is a Davidic *miktam*, a song that is inscribed or written down.

v.1-11 The Singer expresses His confidence in the Lord in whom He is trusting, in the face of others who run after idols.

The Lord has made him secure, and placed him in a good place. The Lord speaks to him, even in the night God is revealing His heart.

There is a confidence that God will keep the singer in life, even when death threatens. There is a sense of hope which goes beyond life in the security of God in this psalm.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2616.mp3>

## **Psalm 19**

A Davidic accompanied song, delivered to the director of music.

With echoes of Psalm 8, this song begins with a meditation on the beauty of the heavenly bodies.

v.1 – 6 Here is a beautiful, poetic celebration of the wonder of the skies. Just looking into them makes one aware of the artistry of their maker, and they are eloquent in every language and in every place where they are seen.

The sun is pictured here as a bridegroom coming out from his tent, adorned in his finery, resplendent and fiery on his way to the marriage, or like an athlete ready for a race.

v.7 – 11 A poetic rehearsal follows of the value of the directions for the rule of life which the Lord has given. They are more precious than gold, and sweeter than honey.

v.12 – 14 Even God's mistakes are not known by man, so the singer asks for the Lord to pardon things he is ignorant of in his own life, as well as things he sins in wilfully. The desire is for all he does to be pleasing to the Lord, his rock and redeemer.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2619.mp3>

## **Psalm 21**

A Davidic accompanied song

v.1 -2 This is a song of praise from the King for the Lord's answering his prayer, followed by a *selah* pause for musical expression.

v.3 – 7 The Lord has given to the King many blessings, including rule, long life, victory and joy, all guaranteed through the *chesed* obligation to His covenant which God keeps.

v. 8 – 12 The retribution of God is a certainty for the Psalmist against those who set themselves against God's plans.

v.13 The Lord in His triumph is praised at the end of the song.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2621.mp3>

## **Psalm 24**

A Davidic accompanied song

v.1 – 2 The song opens with a confession of the creatorial sovereignty of the Lord over every creature, because He made the whole earth and it belongs to Him.

v. 3 – 6 To approach this mighty Creator God entails purity of action and intention, and single-hearted devotion – this leads to blessing, to the kiss of the Creator. A *selah* pause for musical expression follows this thought.

v. 7 – 10 Adam Clarke in his commentary reminds of the bringing back of the ark to Jerusalem, when those carrying the presence-box had to be ritually clean. He sees this as the section where the procession arrives at the gates of the tabernacle, the place set aside for it, with a call to open and let the Lord come and dwell among His people.

For the follower of Christ, this Psalm has resonances of the coming of Jesus to heaven in the time of ascension, entering heaven with the glorious trophies of calvary in his hands and sides; He has conquered the grave, and is now coming to His Father, opening the ancient doors closed through sin which have been barred to man until His triumph.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2624.mp3>

## **Day 120 Psalms 29, 33, 65, 66, 67, 68**

### **In Praise of God's Power**

#### **Psalm 29**

This is a Davidic accompanied song.

v.1 – 11 There is nothing so impressive in nature as a thunderstorm, and this whole Psalm is singing the praise of God as He lets loose the rains from heaven (perhaps rains which the people have been longing for?) with powerful thunder and lightning.

The voice of the Lord is above the clouds (the waters which are above, see Genesis 1); the lightning can bring down great trees, moves the desert sands into rivers and causes frightened animals to calve. The response from the people is to sing of His glory, the One who brings blessing and wholeness to Israel.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2629.mp3>

#### **Psalm 33**

This is a further Davidic accompanied song.

v. 1 – 3 Commending the use of music on the praise of the Lord, in new songs and with skilful playing – God loves music!

v.4 – 11 The Word of the Lord is powerful and righteous, and His sacred obligation to his covenant is demonstrated in creation. By His Word, heaven and stars, seas and earth were made, and by the same Word He orders the nations.

v.12 – 22 Because of this, the Lord is able to rescue and save even where men and their kings fail; where the covenant is invoked, there is hope and security from the One who is the help and shield of Israel.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2633.mp3>

### **Psalm 65**

An accompanied Davidic song, addressed to the director of music.

This is a Psalm of harvest-time, of thanksgiving that God has once again blessed them with food.

v. 1 – 5 The Lord sees all men, whether good or evil. He fulfils the hope of those who seek Him, who come to His courts.

v.6 – 13 There is a picture here of God's ordering all things, from the mighty mountains to the coming of corn to the fields and flocks. The overwhelming message of this Psalm is of a bounteous God who blesses His people with food and protection, even though He has big world to look after!

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2665.mp3>

### **Psalm 66**

This is an accompanied song addressed to the director of music, but author unknown.

v.1 – 9 The praise of the God is sung who miraculously delivered them from Egypt, demonstrating the awesome power they sing of, with a *selah* pause interspersed for a cadenza from the instruments.

The Lord is continuing to watch over Israel.

v.10 – 12 The memory is rehearsed of Israel's bondage in Israel, which is seen as a testing of her dependence on the Lord. Because of that, she has come into the land of promise.

v. 13 – 20 The Lord receives the sacrifices of thanksgiving from a rescued worshipper, who gives testimony for all to hear who will of the faithfulness shown by the Lord to His covenant, His *chesed* love (v.20).

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2666.mp3>

### **Psalm 67**

Addressed to the director of music, this is an accompanied song sung to strings.

v.1-2 The opening words recall the Aaronic blessing of the *Birkat Kohanim*, by which the people of earth recognise the Lord is with His people.

v.3-4 But there is a call for all the peoples of the earth to praise this Lord, a sense of the reign of God going beyond Israel in a universal righteousness. This provokes a space for musical reflection in a *selah*.

v.5-7 As the peoples offer worship, so the Lord responds with abundant blessings, and harvests are produced. As God's blessing is seen, His leaning towards His people, the nations everywhere will be in awe of Him.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2667.mp3>

## **Psalm 68**

An accompanied Davidic song, addressed to the musical director.

v.1 – 4 The Psalm opens with the words of the cry used when the ark of God set out on its journey through the wilderness.(Num. 10.35) This song seems to relate to a time of threat of war, or in the midst of war in Israel's story. At these times, she looks back to the great deliverances, the great rescues of God which she has experienced, and calls on God to show again the same mercy and power exerted before on their behalf.

v.5 – 6 God has created Israel a close community, caring for the oppressed among them, leading to joy among them in contrast to the pagans.

v.7 – 18 The singer looks back to the progress of Israel through Sinai and the battles on the east bank of the Jordan, (Bashan is mentioned specifically) when God overcame their enemies and brought them into their inheritance.

Perhaps the forces of the east are rising again, 'looking enviously' at Jerusalem; the singer exults in the forces of God which are with them and which will topple the enemy.

v. 19 – 23 The Lord is praised as the one who carries the burdens of Israel – a *selah* pause for musical accompaniment ensues. – He is the one who rescues from the advancing enemies from the north-east, and will leave them overwhelmed.

v.24 – 35 The procession of worshippers coming to praise God from all the tribes of Israel are looking to Him to stand for them against their foes, 'the beast among the reeds', the forces threatening a peaceful existence. But the sovereign Lord is their protector, the One who made all things, and He will deliver.

The Psalm ends with an outburst of praise to the Lord who is in the holy place, and who will act for them.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2668.mp3>

## Day 121 Psalms 75, 93, 94, 97, 98, 99, 100

### Psalm 75

Addressed to the director of music, this accompanied song by Asaph the Levite is sung to the tune ‘Do Not Destroy.’

v.1 – 10 This Psalm is an exaltation of the righteous ways of the Lord YHWH, who *right-wises* justly in the earth, and sustains it even when troubles come – a *selah* pause for musical effect comes at this point.

Despite man’s belief that he is in charge, it is actually the Lord who has power to raise up or bring down, which provokes praise for the mighty Lord at the end of the song.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2675.mp3>

### Kingship Psalms

Psalms 93 to 99 have a common theme, the Kingship of the Lord. Some of them begin ‘The Lord is King’ (Heb. **מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה** *Adonai (YHWH) malakh*) as an introduction. All of them exalt the Lord as the ruler over all things.

### Psalm 93

v.1 – 5 This Psalm sets the Kingship of the Lord (YHWH) against the background of the ever-threatening waters of chaos; despite the destructive power of the elements, God has firmly established the earth. One can imagine the composer standing on the beach of the Mediterranean, watching the storm-breakers rolling in with their great power, sensing the might of the waves.

But the Lord is mightier than the waves, and can stand against their power. His holiness, that is, His uniqueness, His ‘one-of-a-kindness’ makes His position secure forever.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2693.mp3>

### Psalm 94

v.1 – 7 Here is an appeal for the Lord who is the avenger of wrongs to see the evil that is going on and *right-wise* for His people. The wicked who oppress, who are doing such damage, seem to think that God does not act, does not vindicate.

v.8 – 11 But just because there is no activity doesn’t mean the Lord doesn’t know what is going on, and He will act, for man’s self-exaltation is, in the end *futile* (Heb **הֶבְהֵל** *hebhel*, transient, ephemeral, short-lived.)

v.12-15 The experience the singer is passing through is a testing, a corrective which is growing his character, knowing that God will finally have the upper hand to restore justice.

v.18 – 23 There is no assistance, no help apart from this Rescuer God; without him we are doomed. Justice is not served by trying to make alliances, compromises with dark powers (v.20) who have no justice, but the Lord who is the shelter is also the vindicator, and the Psalmist waits for the desired outcome.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2694.mp3>

### **Psalm 97**

v.1 – 6 The Kingship and rule of God are cause for the world to be glad. The power of His actions in the lightning and in earthquake and volcano announce His ability to act decisively.

v. 7 – 9 The idols are powerless, in fact, they should be worshipping the Lord (YHWH)! Israel rejoices in God's unique place in the cosmos.

v. 10 – 12 This should turn us from what is evil, knowing that He is protecting our beings from wickedness, resulting in a sense of light and contentment in His people.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2697.mp3>

### **Psalm 98**

An accompanied song.

v.1 – 3 This new song is provoked the awesome work of Rescue which God has achieved, demonstrated to the whole world through His deliverance of Israel, and His commitment to His covenant in *chesed* obligation and *emet* dependability. (v.3)

v. 4 - 6 Music has a key role to play in praise of YHWH the Lord. These few verses exhort us to shout, be noisy and cry out, play instruments, the harp, trumpet and *shophar*, the ram's horn, God is not afraid of noise!

v.7 – 9 The praise-call is extended to the whole of creation, for it too is being rescued by the divine Salvation from its corruption, thus the seas and the earth will sound out, rivers applaud, mountains sing, before the Lord who is coming to *right-wise*, to set things to rights in the earth, with His straight measure.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2698.mp3>

## Psalm 99

This Psalm, perhaps focussed on the worship of God in the Tabernacle and Temple, and the ark in Jerusalem, recalls some of the great examples of God's service.

v.1 – 5 From the mercy-seat between the cherubim, the Lord is located in Jerusalem in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. From here He has established His order in Israel. (Here called Jacob, referring back to the humble beginnings of this people.)

v.6 – 8 The singer recalls the great names of Moses, Aaron and Samuel who saw God answer tangibly, whose story is part of the story of the great Lord who came in cloud and fire, who forgave but also brought retribution when needed.

v.9 The Psalm ends by returning to the 'Holy Hill', the place of worship of Israel in Jerusalem, acknowledging that the story of His unique nature continues.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t2699.mp3>

## Psalm 100

This is an accompanied song to give thanks, a *mizmor le-todah*. Even today, the modern Hebrew word for 'thank you' is *todah* (Heb תודה )

v.1 – 5 Declarative expression of praise and worship is pleasing to God – the shout, prostration, songs of joy, all have a place.

The cause of this praise is the God who has made His people and cares for them as a shepherd cares for his flock, a sign of protection and feeding.

Therefore thanksgiving is enjoined as the praise-place is entered, because, in the ancient and often repeated couplet of Israel,

כִּי-טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ וְעַד-דָּר וְדָר אֱמוּנָתוֹ

(Above is read right to left)

*Ki tov Adonai le-Olam chasdo ve-ad- dor va-dor emunato*

For good the Lord forever His *chesed* and to generation and generation His reliability

(for the rhythm of this refrain, the last syllables of the Hebrew words are stressed.)

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26a0.mp3>

## Day 122 Psalms 103, 104, 113, 114, 117

### Psalms of Praise

#### Psalm 103

A Davidic Psalm.

v. 1 – 6 The singer speaks first to his own being, reminding himself of the benefits (Heb. גְּמוּלָיו *gemulayv* from the root *gamal* meaning to carry, to satisfy, to wean.) that faith in the Lord has brought.

His call is to *bless* the Lord – the word *bless* in Hebrew is linked to the word for knee (Heb. בָּרַךְ *Barakh*) thus again a physical expression, kneeling, is linked to an action of praise. To *bless* is to incline toward, to bend the knee in an action of honour and gratefulness.

There is a danger of forgetting the benefits God brings to us in the swell of daily life. He forgives our failures, heals us, redeems us from destruction, and has given us His covenant obligation, His *chesed* as well as His compassion, and renews us with His bounty, including us in His straight ways and His *right-wising* for the downtrodden.

v.7 – 16 The Psalmist turns to a more corporate focus now, reminding himself that he is part of a story of faithfulness, that the Lord showed Himself as the compassionate and gracious God to the people of Israel and to Moses.

There is a vastness in the dealing with the failures of the people which is brought out here – as high as the skies over the earth, as far as the east from the west (in Hebrew, the sense is, as far as the sunrise is from the sunset.) God has put a gulf of separation between his people and their brokenness, knowing how transient and wayward we are.

v.17 – 22 Here is praise again for the durability and dependability of the Lord's covenant and His *chesed* obligation – He is the King, the ruler over everything. Therefore, the singer calls the heaven and earth, angels and cosmic bodies to bless the Lord, and ends with a call again to His own being to worship. (The word is in the original, 'bless' here, - *barkhu* - not 'praise' - *hallelu* - as some translations have.)

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26a3.mp3>

#### Psalm 104

v.1 This Psalm begins with the same call to bless the Lord as the previous, but this is a recounting of the wonders of creation, following the Genesis story as a guide.

v.2-10 Thus, we start with God, pre-existing all, then speaking light into being, then the heavenly bodies, the firmament (the waters), and the earth itself, with the seas contained in one place, and the mountains and hills established.

v.11- 18 He then turns to animals, birds, man and their provision of food, grass for the cattle, oil, wine and bread for man. The trees provide homes for the birds, and the rocks for the rabbits.

v.19-23 Even at night, when the moon is up, there are animals who have their time then, the nocturnal creatures, the lions hunting at night, going back to their dens when man goes to his work.

v. 24-26 The sea also teems with life, human and animal.

v. 27 – 32 All existence is dependent on the activity of God in sustaining it, and His creative breath, His Spirit continually renews all that is. God is glorified in His works, and is filled with joy over them . (v.31)

v.33-35 The outcome is that the singer sees that God is worth constant and life-long praise, for the wonders of His creation. Those who are intent are marring it with the poison of sin he desires to be removed, but the singer himself will bless the Lord. The Psalm ends with a call for everything to praise – *Hallelu – Yah!*

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26a4.mp3>

### **Psalm 113**

v.1 The Psalm begins with the call to be extravagantly expressive of the Lord's praise

הללו-יהוה *Hallelu- Yah!*

v. 2 – 9 The song is a beautifully rhythmical call to praise, thanking the Lord for His mercy. His prudes the praise is to be day-long, to the One who rules the nations.

His bias for the poor is praised, His readiness to turn the human order of 'rich first' upside-down. He bring the pauper to sit with the princes, and gives the barren woman a place of honour with the mothers.

The song ends with a repeat of the *Hallelu-Yah!*

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26b3.mp3>

### **Psalm 114**

This is a short song telling of the deliverance of the Lord of His people from Egypt.

v. 1 – 8 When Israel came out of Egypt, as God's *holy place* – the unique people of His possession, and His realm of rule (Heb. מַמְשָׁלוֹתָיו *mamshalotav*) the sea was driven back and the Jordan opened before them, and the mountain of Sinai flamed with fire.

The question is asked why, although no answer is given. Instead, the awe of the Lord is upon the earth when He comes, the one who gives water in the desert.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26b4.mp3>

### Psalm 117

In the interests of appreciating the poetry of the Hebrew Psalms, a whole Psalm is here reproduced in the original, to sense its rhythm and succinct expression. Stress is placed on the emboldened syllables. This is a short Psalm of praise to the Lord for His faithfulness. (The Hebrew lines are read right to left).

הַלְלוּ אֶת-יְהוָה כָּל-גּוֹיִם שִׁבְחוּהוּ כָּל-הָאֲמִיּוֹת

*Hallelu et-Adonai(YHWH) kol -goyim Shabchu-hu kol ha-ummim*

Praise the Lord , all nations, commend him all the peoples,

כִּי גִבֹר עָלֵינוּ חֶסֶדּוֹ וְאֱמֶת-יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם

*Ki ga-var aley-nu chasdo ve-emet Adonai le-olam*

For strong upon us his *chesed* and truth of the Lord forever

הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה *Hallelu- Yah* Praise the Lord!

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26b7.mp3>

### Day 123 Psalm 119

This, the longest of all the songs, is a skillfully crafted poem in the acrostic style, that is, each stanza of the Psalm begins each of its lines with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is why most Bible translations carry a Hebrew letter at the beginning of each section of the Psalm – *aleph, bet, gimel, dalet* and so on, up to the last letter *tav*.

For this reason, the Psalm will be dealt with in headed sections, rather than in verse numbers. The theme of the whole Psalm is the contentment found only in walking according the rule of life, the *Torah* (Heb תּוֹרָה ) of the Lord. The word *Torah* comes from the root word *arah* (Heb אָרָה) meaning to found or to cast. The word is most often translated ‘Law’ in English, but this has become too forensic, too narrow a definition of the Hebrew. *Torah* is instruction, foundation, pattern, mode and way of life – this is why the translation preferred by this commentator is *rule*, akin to the rule of life as followed by religious orders – not a code of legal directives, but a whole life-giving pattern which, if followed, brings delight and security. Indeed, the whole Psalm opens with the statement, ‘Content are those who walk in integrity, following the Lord’s rule of life.’

## Aleph א

v.1 The opening word is the same as the opening word of the book of Psalms – *asher* (Heb אֲשֶׁר) meaning content, satisfied, happy in life. The singer sets out here his longing to walk clean before the Lord in His rule of life, His *Torah*, so that he lives without shame, but he needs the Lord's help and presence to do this.

## Bet ב

v.9 The singer, a young man, wants to know to keep his way straight, undiverted. He has stored up the precepts, the instructions of God in his heart so as to keep from straying, and lets them be his joy, his meditation and his delight.

## Gimel ג

v.17 The singer describes himself as the servant of the Lord, and knows that only as the Lord walks with him, opening his eyes and instructing him, will he see the depths of God's truth. Even if he is opposed by those around him, a deep knowledge of God's ways will keep him from contempt and cynicism.

## Dalet ד

v.25 In times of depression, the singer knows that God's precepts will raise him; he calls for strength from the Lord, because he has set himself to follow only God. He is free because he has the boundary of God's directions to follow.

## Heh ה

v.33 As the Lord gives him understanding, he can turn away from his self-centredness and shallow materialism, which bring disgrace, to the delight of God's peace and His ways.

## Vav ו

v.41 He looks for the *chesed* of God, the faithful obligation of God to His covenant, and for the rescue, the *teshuah* (from root *yeshua*) of God to be able to give an answer to his detractors. He is ready to speak to others, even to rulers, of the rule of life of the Lord, if God will maintain His faithfulness to him.

## Zayin ז

v. 49 The singer experiences opposition and mockery from the ungodly, though his hope is in the promise of God for the future, and the dependability of the *Torah* rule of life, established in the ancient past. The wicked anger him with their godless ways, but the singer's life-theme is the words of the Lord to him, wherever he goes.

## Chet ך

v.57 The opening word of this section is *chelqi* (Heb חֶלְקִי ) meaning, my portion or my destiny – the Lord is his destiny. He has considered his choice, and even if the ungodly try and prevent him, and even it means getting up in the middle of the night, he will be faithful to the Lord and His friends, just as God's *chesed* obligation is witnessed in the earth around him.

## Tet ט

v. 65 Many of the lines in this section begin with the Hebrew word *tov*, (Heb טוֹב) meaning *good* or *well*. The singer appeals to the Lord to do good (*tov*) to him, asks to be taught good judgment, and recognises that God in Himself is and does good. Even though he has been lied about and misused by others, he sees it ultimately as a good thing for him, so that he could be trained more in God's ways. Lastly, the Lord's rule of life is good, more precious than earthly riches.

## Yod ך

v.73 The letter *yod* (where our word 'jot' comes from) is connected with the Hebrew word for hand, *yad* (Heb יָד) which opens this section, 'Your hands', which made and formed the singer, but also bring him understanding through their actions, even through the pain of chastisement. In those times, he knows God's *chesed* continues. Even though the arrogant are wronging him, he will remain constant and a resource for those who love God's life-rule.

## Kaph כ

v.81 This is a cry from the singer for God's rescue; he is hanging on, his eyes failing, 'like a wineskin in the smoke', with traps laid by the ungodly around him. He has nearly been wiped out by his foes, but he is holding on to God's *chesed* obligation to rescue him.

## Lamed ל

v.89 The opening word of this section is a foil to the previous cry of pain – *le'Olam* (Heb. לְעוֹלָם ), meaning *forever* – the Lord is everlasting, His word established in the heavens. In this section, the singer dwells on the faithfulness of God, His *emunah* (Heb. אֱמוּנָתְךָ ) His dependability, and His longstanding promises and ways. If not for these, the singer would have perished; but they have been his rescue from the enemy. Even though created things have limitations, the Lord's ways have no end.

## Mem מ

v.97 'How I love Your *Torah* rule of life..' cries out the singer now, these insights which make him wiser than his enemies, even take him beyond where his teachers and leaders are at; they have kept him on the right road, and they bring sweetness and contentment to

his life. This is because God Himself has been the teacher, the singer has made the relationship with the Lord the number one priority.

### Nun נ

v.105 The ‘n’ section opens with the Hebrew word *ner* (Heb נֵר ) , a light or a lamp – ‘a lamp to my feet is Your word, and a light for my path.’ Despite his sufferings and the traps of the enemy, the singer is determined to stay on the track of the Lord’s leading because of this guidance.

### Samekh ס

v. 113 The singer rejects hypocrites and double-mindedness, turning away from the ways of the crooked; rather he seeks the refuge and hope of God’s ways and word, appealing to be vindicated , knowing that God will not bless the ways of those who reject Him.

### Ayin ע

v.121 Not only does the singer love God’s ways, but he does them – the opening word of this section is *asiti* (Heb עָשִׂיתִי ) meaning, ‘I have done, enacted justice and equity’; now, he is looking for the Lord to act, growing weary with waiting for the rescue he knows will come, because of God’s *chesed* obligation to His covenant. ‘It is time for you to act, Lord, for your rule of life is not being observed’ (v.126), this way which the singer values above gold.

### Pe פ

v.129 ‘Wonderful (Heb.פְּלִאוֹת *pila’ot*) Your precepts’ opens this section; the singer extols the value and the desirability of the Lord’s word, and asks for these, not sin and men’s oppression to rule over him. He is in tears because the Lord’s rule of life is not being followed.

### Tsadhe צ

v.137 The word *tsaddiq* (Heb. צַדִּיק ) , righteous, opens this section – ‘Lord, you are righteous, straight.’ Despite the enemies’ efforts to throw him off course, the singer will stay with God’s ways, even in the midst of trouble and stress.

### Qoph ק

v.145 The singer has been crying out with his whole heart for the Lord’s answer, getting up early to seek Him, staying awake at night. His enemies are near, but the Lord is nearer and His ways last forever.

Resh ר

v.153 ‘See my suffering’ the singer cries, and how I am keeping true to you. He is looking for rescue and redemption from the foes who pursue him, whom he loathes, but he is looking for God’s *chesed* obligation to come through for him, the word of the dependable, eternal God.

Sin/Shin ש

v.161 The singer is being pursued by *Sarim*, princes or rulers – like David was pursued by Saul, perhaps – for no reason. Still he relies on the Lord’s promise – seven times a day he takes time to turn to the Lord in thanks for his rule of life., because it the source of *shalom* (Heb שְׁלוֹמַם ), wholeness, satisfaction and contentment. (v.165)

Tav ת

v.169 ‘Let my cry come near you’ is the appeal of the singer in the last section, in a prayer for God’s help and intervention for one who admits his failure and brokenness, but who knows that the Lord’s rule of life and His directions for living are the answer. He looks for God’s rescue, and for God’s aid in his life, so that he may live to praise and honour God.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26b9.mp3>

**Day 124 Psalms 122, 124, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138**

**Songs for the Journey, Songs of Worship**

The first four Psalms in this section are ‘songs of going up’, or ‘ascents’ – for more on this see Day 115, notes on Psalm 120 and 121. They were used in the journey to Jerusalem for festivals to encourage and prepare the heart.

The last three are exhortations to praise and worship, for use in the temple.

**Psalm 122**

This is headed, ‘For or by David’.

v.1 – 5 The singer is full of joy when the call is made to go the house of the Lord, already picturing being there in the holy city in Jerusalem. The name of the city of Jerusalem (Heb. יְרוּשָׁלַיִם *Yeru-shalayim*) means ‘founded in wholeness, peace.’

The singer describes Jerusalem as compact, the place to which the tribes of Israel come to worship in accordance with the vision of David for a permanent structure for their sacrifices and national guidance.

v.6 – 9 The wellbeing of Jerusalem was a key to the wellbeing of Israel, hence the prayers for its peace and security. Even today, the wellbeing of Jerusalem is a matter of concern and prayer for billions of people on planet earth, so strategic is it in her story.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26c2.mp3>

### Psalm 124

A Davidic song for 'going up' to Jerusalem.

v.1-8 This Psalm contemplates the fate of Israel without the Lord's intervention; they would have been totally overwhelmed by their attackers, and swallowed up in the 'raging waters' of chaos. But the Lord has protected them, and like a bird escaping a trap, they have been rescued, because the Lord's name is the source of their help.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26c4.mp3>

### Psalm 133

A Davidic song of 'going up' to Jerusalem

This short Psalm is presented here in full, to give the flavour of the original Hebrew song. The Hebrew is read from right to left. Stressed syllables are emboldened.

הִנֵּה מַה-טוֹב וּמַה-נְּעִים שֶׁבֶת אֲחִים גַּם-יַחַד

*Hi-neh ma tov u-ma nay-im shevet achim gam-yachad*

Behold, how good and how sweet to dwell brothers even as one

כִּשְׁמֵן הַטּוֹב עַל-הָרֹאשׁ יֵרֵד עַל-הַזָּקָן זָקָן-אַהֲרֹן

*Ka-shemen ha-tov al ha-rosh yo-red al ha-zaqan zeqan Aharon*

As oil the good on the head going down on the beard beard of Aaron

שֵׁיֶרֶד עַל-פִּי מְדוֹתָיו

*She-yored al-pi midotav*

That went down to edge of his robes

כְּטַל-חֶרְמוֹן שֶׁיֵרֵד עַל-הַרְרֵי צִיּוֹן

*Ke-tal Chermon she-yored al harerey Tziyon*

As dew of Hermon that runs down on hills of Zion

כִּי שָׁם צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת-הַבְּרָכָה חַיִּים עַד-הָעוֹלָם

*Ki sham tzivvah Adonai et-ha-berakhah chayim ad ha-olam*

For there commanded Lord the blessing life to the ages.

The singer celebrates the sense of unity and togetherness in the going together to worship at Jerusalem, upon which God pours out His blessing.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at  
<http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26d3.mp3>

#### **Psalm 134**

A Davidic song of going up.

Again, as this is a short Psalm of blessing, to give the feel of the original poetry, it is reproduced in full here. (The Hebrew is read right to left and stressed syllables are emboldened.)

הִנֵּה בָרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה כָּל-עַבְדֵי יְהוָה

*Hiney barkhu et Adonai kol-avdey Adonai*

Behold bless the Lord all servants of Lord

הָעֹמְדִים בְּבַיִת-יְהוָה בַּלַּיְלוֹת

*Ha-om-dim be-veyt Adonai ba-leylot*

The standers in house of Lord in the night

שֹׂאוּ-יְדֵיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ וּבָרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה

*Se-u ye-dekhem qodesh u-varkhu et Adonai*

Raise your hands to holy (place) and bless the Lord

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ

*Yevarekheka Adonai miTziyon oseh shamayim va-aretz*

May He bless you, the Lord, from Zion maker of heaven and earth.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26d4.mp3>

### Psalm 135

There is no opening ascription for this Psalm.

The song opens with a declarative command , ‘*Hallelu Yah*’ – Praise the Lord.

v.1-3 A general exhortation here to praise the Lord, because it is a good and pleasant thing to do, beneficial to the worshipper as well as to the Lord.

v.4 – 12 There is a rehearsing of God’s acts in creation and history – His power in the elements, His choice of Jacob, His deliverance from Egypt, His victory over the pagans and His settlement of Israel in their land.

v.13 – 18 While the Lord lasts eternally, and is able to respond to the prayers of His people for mercy, the heathen idols are dumb and unresponsive, and their makers fools.

v.19 – 21 A closing call to bless the Lord to all Israel and their priests, focusing on His dwelling at Jerusalem.

The Psalm ends as it began, with a *Hallelu Yah!*

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26d5.mp3>

### Psalm 136

There is no ascription for this Psalm. It is a responsive Psalm, perhaps with a leader singing one line, and then the people responding with the refrain which goes through the whole Psalm , *ki le-Olam chasdo* (Heb. כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ ) , ‘For to the ages His *chesed*, His obligation to fulfil His covenant.’

v.1 The Psalm opens with the line which is a constant refrain, then, of Israel’s worship;

הוֹדוּ לַאֲדוֹנָי כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ *Hodu lAdonai ki tov ki le-olam chasdo*

Thank the Lord as good for forever His *chesed*

This forms the basis of this Psalm, and is sung again at great moments in Israel’s history, a confession of faith in God’s dependability. The song continues, pausing for the response from the people at each line.

v.2- 9 God’s power in creation is praised.

v.10 – 22 The rescue story of God, and the victories in the desert are remembered, with thanks for the promised land.

v. 23 – 25 Thanks for protection, redemption and provision in the land.

v.26 The song ends as it began, with a call for thankfulness to the God of heaven for his everlasting *chesed*.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26d6.mp3>

## **Psalm 138**

This is a Davidic accompanied song.

v.1-3 The singer brings personal thanks, even in the face of other so-called gods; the Lord demonstrates His *chesed* obligation and His *emet* dependability through His actions which make His name greater than ever.

v.4 – 5 A prayer for all who rule to acknowledge the Lord.

v.6 – 8 A key is right relationship with God, staying in a place of dependence upon Him, so that He can act to rescue, and demonstrate His promised response to His covenant.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26d8.mp3>

## **Day 125 Psalms 139, 145, 148, 150**

### **Praise Personal and Universal**

#### **Psalm 139**

This is one of the most personal Psalms, giving a sense of the God who is very close and very intimate .

It is a Davidic accompanied song addressed to the Director for Music.

v.1- 6 The singer marvels at the intimacy of the Lord, who knows everything about him, even before he knows it himself.

He says of the Lord, ‘you have hemmed me in’, or ‘beset’ me, (v.5, Heb. **צָרָתָנִי** *Tzartani*, from the root word *tzur* meaning to confine or to enclose.) It can be a very limiting feeling, but we know that the Psalmist feels safe like this, like a baby close swaddled and held close to her mother.

v.7 – 12 There is nowhere to escape from God, which could be positive or negative. One thing that it does convey is the sense of being always in God’s sight, whatever our circumstances, whether in the heights of heavenly joy, or in the deep darkness of human suffering. The Lord is always there.

v.13 – 18 The Lord even knows us before our birth, there at the knitting of our fabric together inside our mother. No wonder the Psalmist exclaims at the wonder of God's thought about us as individuals, the one who never lets us out of His sight.

v.19 – 22 In the midst of these beautiful meditations on the nature of the Lord's closeness, there is still the nagging issue of the oppression of God's enemies around; the singer confesses to a 'complete hatred' of these foes, and wants to be as far from them as he is close to the Lord.

v.23 – 24 Perhaps in the light of this anger which rises up, the Psalm ends with a thoughtful prayer – search me, test me O God, and my motives, in case what I feel comes from the toxic waste of evil which is in me, and lead me in the way of lasting life.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26d9.mp3>

### **Psalm 145**

This is one of the few Psalms described as a Davidic praise song, a *tehillah* (Heb תְּהִלָּה ) meaning praise – the book of Psalms itself is called by the same word.

v.1-3 A personal commitment to give thanks and praise to God on a daily basis, because of God's worthiness to receive it.

v.4 – 7 As the singer hears the stories of God's acts and power through the generations, his response is to pass them on in declaration of his own.

v.8 – 20 The body of the Psalm is a recounting of the attributes of the Lord and His benefits, starting with the ancient revelation of His name and nature to Moses in Exodus 34 – rich in *chesed* and *emet*-dependability.

v. 21 The Singer calls all creation to join with him in recounting this thanksgiving to the Lord his God.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26e5.mp3>

### **Psalm 148**

The Psalm opens with the call, *Hallelu Yah!* Praise the Lord., be expressive and exuberant.

v.1 – 6 The singer addresses the heavens and all that is in them, including angelic beings and heavenly bodies, the sky and clouds, which God has placed, calling on them to give God exuberant praise.

v.7 – 13 He then calls on earth to respond with its praise, sea and elements, mountains, trees, animals and human beings, all caught up in a paean of expressive worship.

v.14 The Lord has demonstrated his love through His people, bringing them strength and keeping them close to Him.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26e8.mp3>

### **Psalm 150**

This song, placed last in the book, is a rich summing up of the whole. It begins with the *Hallelu Yah* call to praise, and gives instruction on the nature of expressive praise to God.

His praise happens in the the holy place of His choosing, and focuses on His great acts.

There are a great variety of instruments mentioned here; trumpet, harp and lyre, tambourines, strings, flute and cymbals. Dance is also encouraged, as an expression of adoration.

The song, and book ends with a call for everything that breathes to praise the Lord – praise, after all, cannot sound in a vacuum; and we have the blessings of an atmosphere in which to express that praise.

The original, spoken Hebrew version of this Psalm can be heard at <http://media.snunit.k12.il/kodeshm/mp3/t26f0.mp3>

