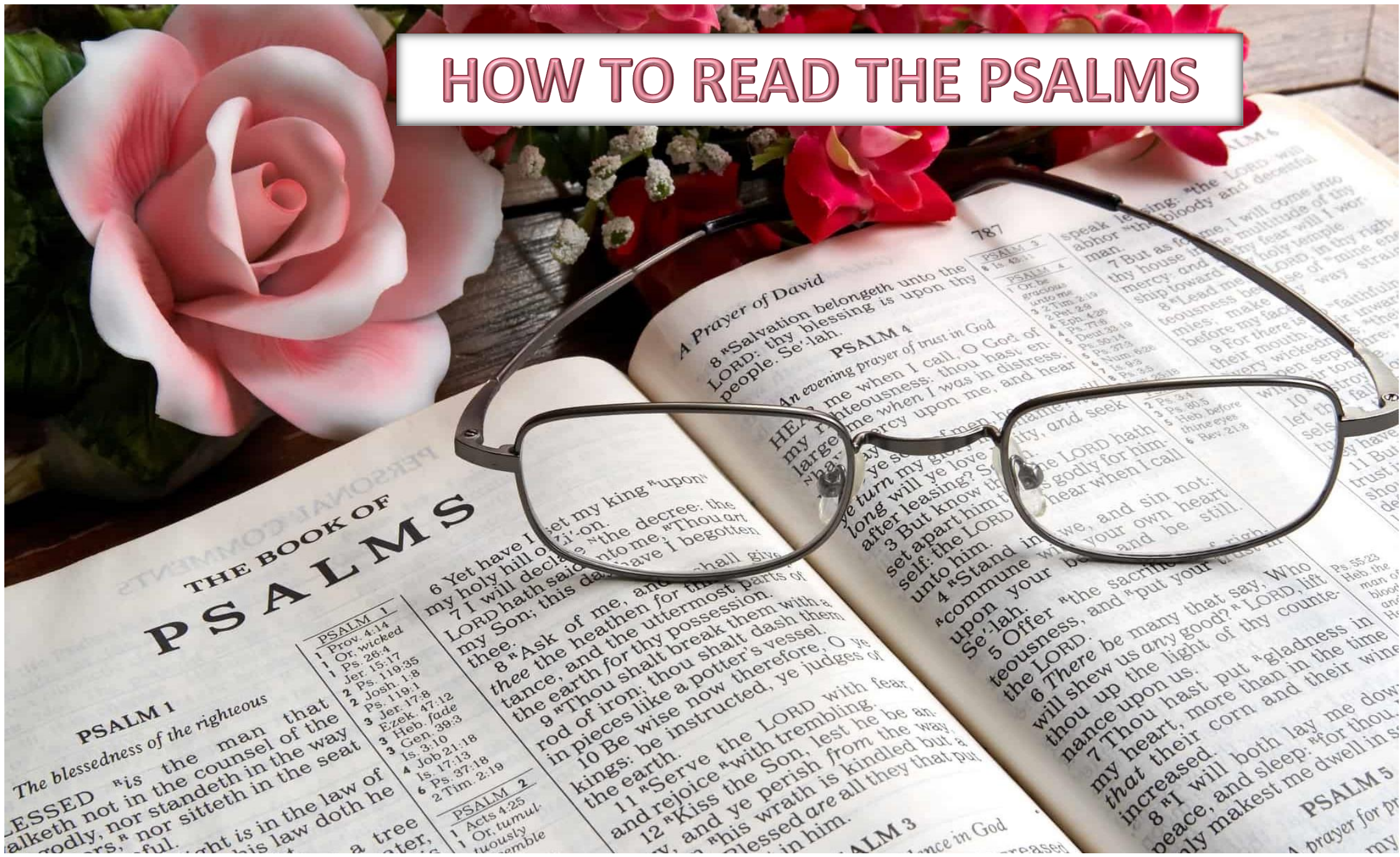


HOW TO READ THE PSALMS



“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures”

(Luke 24:44, 45)

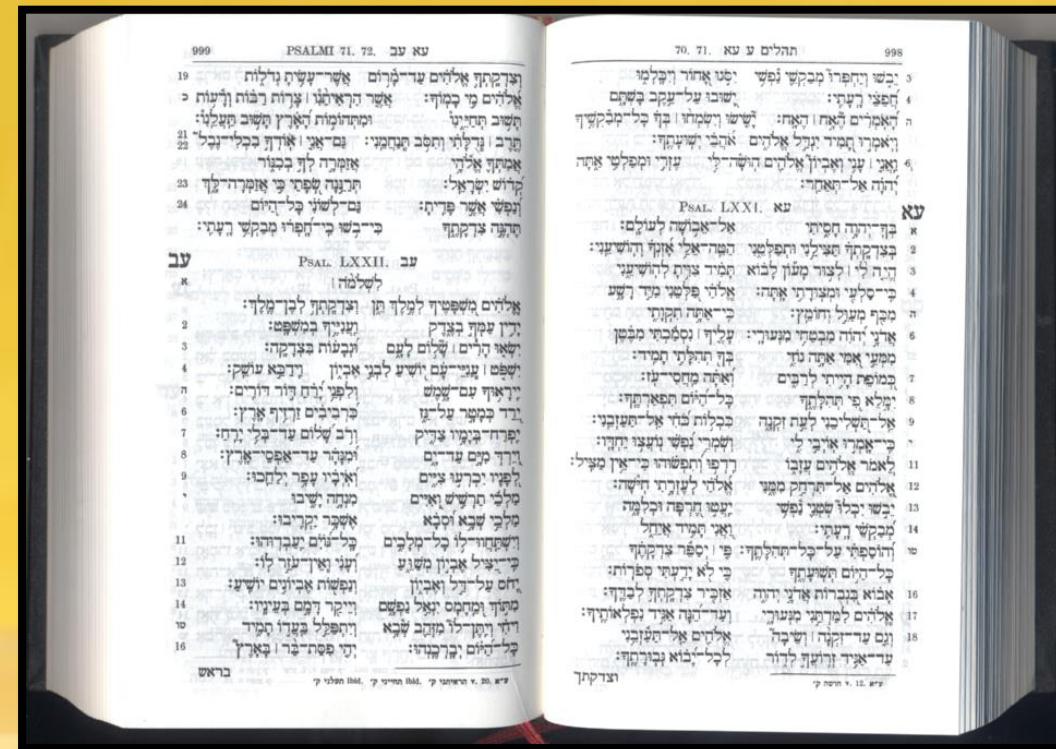


How to read the Psalms? The book of Psalms should be read keeping in mind that it is a peculiar book in many ways.

Unlike the rest of the books of the Bible, it was written by different authors, in different times and circumstances: from Moses to the return from the Babylonian exile.

It covers themes and styles as diverse as praise, imprecation, lament, history...

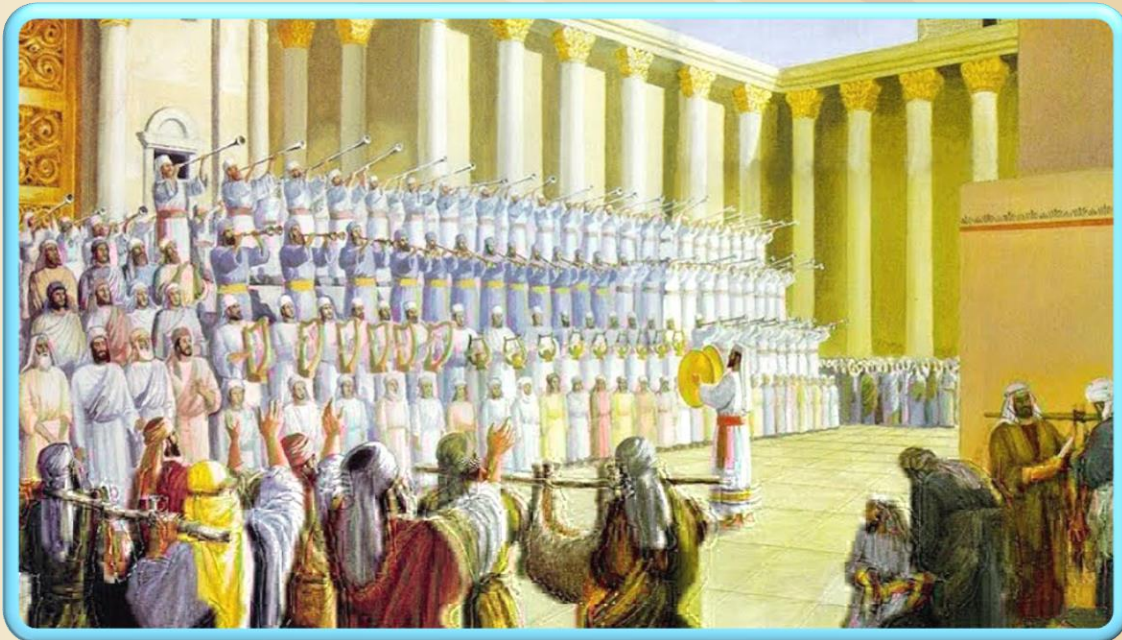
Above all, we must keep in mind that it is an inspired book, where the Holy Spirit speaks to us directly.



- A book of hymns.
- The authors and their experiences.
- Theme and style.
- A prayer book.
- Its protagonist: God.

A BOOK OF HYMNS

“On that day David first delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the Lord” (1 Chronicles 16:7)



The name of the book derives from the Greek word *Psalmoi* (songs sung with musical accompaniment), which is the title of the book in the Septuagint (LXX). In Hebrew, his name is *Tehillim* (praises).

The psalms were used as hymns to sing during the worship service in the Temple and in the synagogues.

Reference is made to instruments, melodies, and choir leaders in the superscription of several psalms (e.g., Ps. 9; 45; 88).

Some of them were used in special moments:

In the moments of worship on Saturday (Ps. 92)

During the pilgrimage of the annual festivals and new moons (the “Egyptian *hallel*” Ps. 113-118; and the “great *hallel*” Ps. 136)

In the morning worship of the synagogues (“daily *hallel*” Ps 145-150)

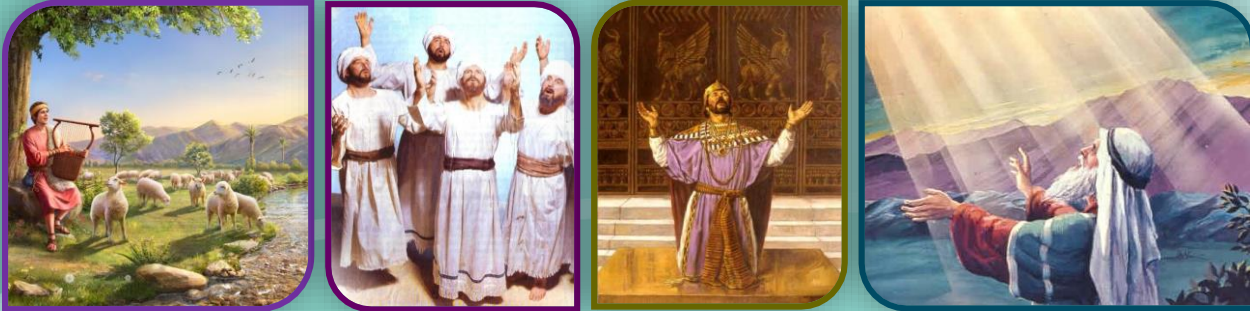


The Christian church also adopted the book of Psalms as a worship hymnal (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).

THE AUTHORS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

"Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son"
(superscribed from Psalm 3)

Most of the psalms were written by David (2 Sam. 23:1).
Other authors were:



Asaph and his sons (50, 73-83)

The sons of Korah (42, 44-47, 49, 84-85, 88)

Heman the ezrahite (88, as co-author)

Ethan ezrahite (89)

Solomon (72, 127)

Moses (90)

Many of the psalms reveal the personal experience of their authors (very similar to ours):

Difficulties

Doubts and sufferings

Experiences of divine forgiveness

Joys

Devotion and gratitude to God for his faithfulness and love

Hope in God

Trust in divine promises

Testimony of redemption

Cry for salvation



THEME AND STYLE

"The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1)

Psalms encompasses a wide variety of themes that encompass the entire human experience and its relationship with God:

- Hymns that praise God as Creator, Sovereign and Judge
- Psalms of Thanksgiving for God's Abundant Blessings
- Lamentations begging God to free us from problems
- Wisdom psalms with practical guidelines for life
- Psalms of the king, which point to Christ as King and Liberator
- Historical psalms that review the past history of Israel and God's faithfulness to it



They are written in the form of poetry. Hebrew poetry differs from Western poetry. Some of their styles are:

Parallelism

Combine words, phrases or thoughts symmetrically, repeating or contrasting an idea

When I see **your skies**, the work of your fingers, **the moon and the stars** which you formed (Ps. 8:3)

Images

Use figurative language

Let the rivers clap their hands; Let the hills be joyful together (Psalm 98:8)

Merism

Expresses the whole through contrasting parts

O Jehovah, God of my salvation, **day and night** I cry before you (Psalm 88:1)

Word games

They use words with similar sounds to highlight a message. In Psalm 96:5 a play on words is created between *elohim* (gods) and *elilim* (idols)

Because all the **gods** of the people are **idols**; but the Lord made the heavens (Psalm 96:5)

A BOOK OF PRAYERS

Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness" (Psalm 143:1)



Romany Fawzy

The psalmists address God in prayer personally: "Give heed to the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for to You I will pray" (Ps. 5:2).

In Psalms, God and man interact vividly. Through prayers and praises, man – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – manifests his hope, fear, anger, sadness and pain. Feelings that transcend the circumstances, religion, ethnicity or gender of its readers. We can all identify, at one time or another, with the content of the psalms.

We can perceive in these prayers the direct action of the Spirit of God. "David the son of Jesse [...] the sweet singer of Israel said: The Spirit of the Lord has spoken through me, and his word has been on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:1-2).

We also take breath in the hope that God hears our prayer: "But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer" (Ps. 66:19).

ITS PROTAGONIST: GOD

"the Lord gives victory to his anointed. He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary with the victorious power of his right hand" (Psalm 20:6 NIV)

As in the life of the psalmist, God must occupy a central place in our lives, and we know that we can count on Him for everything.

Psalm 16:8 He is always in our thoughts

Psalm 44:8 We glory in Him and praise Him all the time

Psalm 46:1 He is our protection and strength

Psalm 47:1 We hail it with joy

Psalm 57:2 We cry out to Him seeking His favor

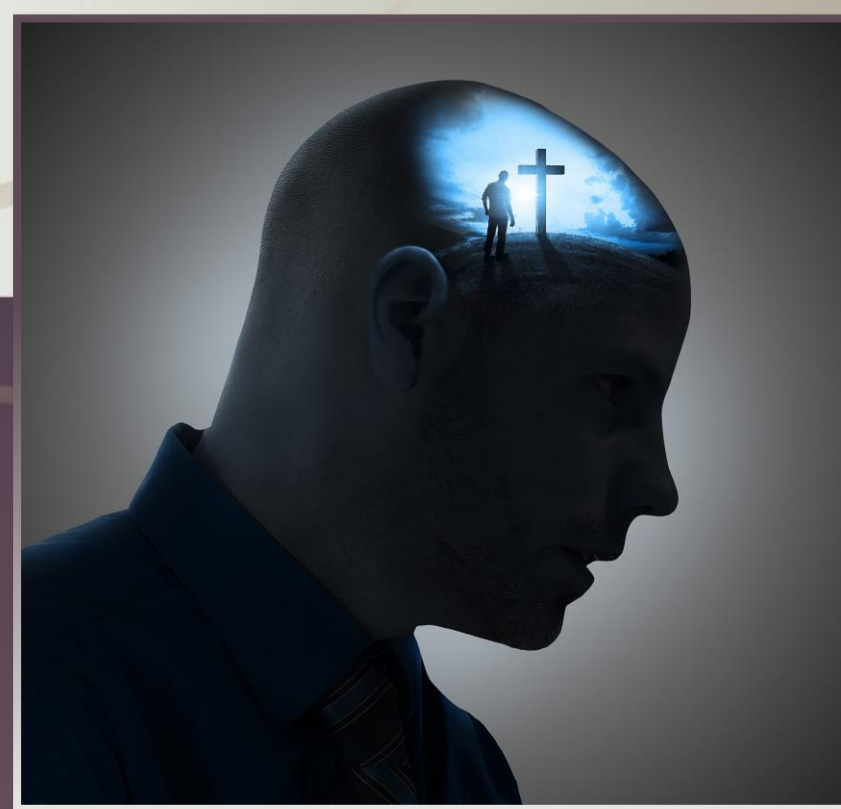
Psalm 62:8 We pour out our hearts before Him

Psalm 82:8 We demand His justice

Psalm 121:7 We know that He protect us from evil

Thanks to Psalms, we know that God hears us, even though we cannot see him, and answers our prayers at the right time (Ps. 3:4; 10:1; 20:5-6).

God is in his Holy Temple, but he is also at my side (Ps. 11:4; 23:4). We can be confident and secure in his presence (Ps. 119:58).



“The psalms of David pass through the whole range of experience, from the depths of conscious guilt and self-condemnation to the loftiest faith and the most exalted communing with God. His life record declares that sin can bring only shame and woe, but that God's love and mercy can reach to the deepest depths, that faith will lift up the repenting soul to share the adoption of the sons of God. Of all the assurances which His word contains, it is one of the strongest testimonies to the faithfulness, the justice, and the covenant mercy of God”