

Tehillim (Psalms)



Part 1 of a 4 Part Introduction

Session 1

(The following material is compiled predominantly from an anthology of Orthodox Jewish commentary, written and arranged by Rabbi Avroham Chaim Feuer from the *Artscroll Tanach Series Tehillim Volume 1*. Additional insights from a Nazarene Israelite perspective have been added by Jason Jordan. Additional Tehillim translation by Rabbi Hillel Danziger)

The Samurai are often regarded as lethal oriental warriors of a bygone era without much thought to what motivated them. The word “Samurai” means “those who serve in close attendance to the king.” The philosophy of the Samurai was, “When one is serving officially or in the master's court, he should not think of a hundred or a thousand people, but should consider only the importance of the master.”

This philosophy was also at the heart of King David in his service to the King of Kings. His devotion to YHWH produced a collection of writings that reside in the very heart of Scripture, pumping the revitalising nutrient of illumination to every other verse.

King David’s Psalms capture every joy, grief, thanksgiving, beseeching, emotion, mission, challenge and vicissitude experienced by every Israelite in every age that has and will ever be. Reading them is like entering a timeless refuge of healing and recovery. Visiting them frequently with a receptive mind and a penitent heart will yield much treasure.

Psalms sate the Creator with songs of praise. There is always a Psalm for every occasion. The Psalms are a living book, which cover the entire spectrum of human emotions and experiences. If reading and meditating on them have no active part in a believer’s life, that believer’s t’shuvah is not fully realised.

When words of a Torah scholar are repeated in this world, his lips pulsate with life, even from the grave. In the case of Psalms, reading them imbues King David with life. Thus because David is a descendant of Messiah, reading them hastens Yahshua’s return. **Isaiah 43:21; “This nation I created for myself to recount my praise.”**

A key to good Scriptural scholarship is to toil over every word and phrase of the Torah and the Psalms.

Man is the greatest wonder YHWH ever created, because he is a miniature world composed of all the elements found in the entirety of creation. All the ingredients of the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms are represented in man.

Most of all, the lofty intellect and the Spirit of YHWH resides in him. This each person is a tiny universe and the potential seed of many nations. Thus the death of one individual can be likened to the death of the entire population of the world.

Mankind's original mission, commencing with Adam, was to conduct a symphony orchestra of every aspect of creation according to a score represented by the Torah to enable him to use everything in its proper time and place. **Psalms 8:7; "You gave him dominion over the works of your hands, you placed everything under his feet."**

Man's dominion is not just a privilege, it is an obligation. It requires balance, adjusting, guiding and coaxing of all the world's divergent forces until they can sing like a symphony through Divine Service thus hastening the return of Moshiach (Messiah).

Man is the earth's conductor.

Though Adam failed to elevate the world to Divine perfection, he devoted the rest of his life to repentance (t'shuvah).

In the course of Adam's quest, he was enabled to scour all the souls of those destined to be born on the earth. When he came across the soul of David who was ordained to carry on his mission, but only allotted three hours of life, signifying the remaining celestial days that were needed for Adam to perfect the world, Adam granted David 70 years of his own life in which to fully accomplish this task. Therefore, reading and studying the Psalms intimately involves a person with Adam and David's mission.

Adam not only dwelled in paradise, but paradise dwelled inside him. He was blessed with inner joy and self confidence.

The agony of self-doubt never tormented the first man (prior to the fall). He was confident that his every motive was pure, and it was...

He was a perfect and harmonious blend of sacred forces. He resembled heavenly beings whose achievements did not deviate from their appointed mission.

At this time his inclination was completely good and the Evil Inclination was external, only being able to challenge him from without as apposed to within. The Evil Inclination was given ear to and a persuasive argument was heeded. This is why the Jewish Sages advise to give no room in one's mind for evil thoughts.

The breaking of a *kashrut law* by eating a forbidden food enabled the enemy to get a foot hold from within, becoming a part of Adam, moving from its external realm, into an internal one.

Adam's self-mastery had vanished!! The universal song he was conducting had become interrupted. The Children of Israel mimicked this same fall when they constructed the golden calf. The Midrash describes HaSatan sending a spirit of confusion among the people during Moshe's long absence, which resulted in a falsely perceived desire to focus their worship of YHWH onto the form of an animal.

Like Adam, Israel had destroyed its accomplishments (i.e., spiritual ascension) up until that time. **Psalms 82:7; "In truth, you will perish like Adam."**

It took three and a half centuries later for Israel to enter into a period of renewal. It was the era of the prophet or seer known as Samuel.

In Samuel's lifetime his students learned, under his instruction, how to draw close to YHWH. **1 Samuel 9:9; "At that time, when a man wanted to inquire of YHWH, they would say; 'Come let us go to the seer;' for that is what the prophet was called in earlier times – the seer."**

Samuel originally anointed Saul, but after YHWH's rejection of him, he instructed Samuel to go to the house of Jesse. The family of Jesse, from which King David eventually arose, was dedicated to regaining Adam's pristine purity.

The former Moabite, Ruth had a son called Oved (servant) who served YHWH with a full heart.

Oved bore a son called Jesse who in turn had eight sons, all of which were disqualified except the eighth son, David. Samuel, at first, was blinded to David's credentials, seeing him as having a similar disposition to Esau, who slayed his enemies, but David slayed his enemies on the council of the Sanhedrin.

Samuel's account of David as being a man of violence was accurate, but by David constantly heeding the voices of the Sages, he had refined his character. He regularly consulted with YHWH as to what his next step should be.

In contrast, Saul had a far better temperament than David. Saul's nature was cool and subdued, while David's nature seethed with burning passions tamed only with great effort.

Though David had a harsh streak, which was inclined toward violence, he was constantly refining himself, enabling YHWH to work with his nature directing him to focus his aggression into idolaters and heretics. As a result his demeanor toward fellow Israelites was one of kindness and compassion, So it was a unique man that YHWH used to restore His vision of his nation. **1 Samuel 16:12 says, "Arise, anoint him, for he is the one!!!"** As a result, Psalms is the blueprint for the path of self mastery.

King David ascends the rungs on the ladder leading to perfection in the following order: Watchfulness leads to zeal, zeal leads to cleanliness, cleanliness leads to separation and separation leads to purity.

The Diary of a Struggle

By reading through the Psalms it becomes uniquely apparent that man's one purpose is to attain closeness to YHWH by rescuing his soul from deterrents and distractions.

Watchfulness – One should station himself on vigilant watch as a watchman on a tower. The name of the movement which Rabbi Sha'ul was accused as being a ringleader of was the "Natsarim." The word "Natsarim" means, "Offshoot-branch watchmen." We are to stay away from evil company, which is a prime deterrent to attaining closeness to YHWH. **Proverbs 24:1; "Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them."** This is directed at the heathen and so-called brothers and sisters who insist on maintaining a sinful lifestyle (i.e., sinners who pose a danger to a believer and fellow brothers and sisters who are in a perpetual state of sin). Sinners who are not members of the Commonwealth of Israel can be associated with only in the capacity of sifting them from the nations. This is why Messiah Yahshua was occasionally found in the company of corrupt men. This does not mean that we relieve ourselves of the company of a spouse or relative who is not an Israelite. If a wife who does not wish to follow Messiah, but agrees to allow a husband to do so, is permitted to remain with her believing husband. **1 Corinthians 7:14; "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified because of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are set-apart."**

Zeal – **Psalms 119:60; "I was quick, I did not delay in keeping your commandments."** David was very zealous. He burned with passion and love for serving YHWH. His movements in performing commandments were like the quick movement of fire. Perfect service is the desire of the heart and longing of the soul.

King David subdued and redirected his Evil Inclination to serve YHWH along with his good inclination. Elsewhere in the Psalms we read that he later put his Evil Inclination to death. **Psalms 109:22; "For I am afflicted and needy, And my heart is wounded within me."** This verse speaks of the pain in his heart over the death of his Evil Inclination. It created vacuum in his heart, leaving it wide open for YHWH's transcendence to enter.

King David was considered as having a heart after YHWH's very own heart. For it is the obligation of any king of Israel to be the heart of his people and to reflect this Psalms sit in the very centre of Scripture as if pumping blood throughout its entire body of verses.

Some zealous characteristic that King David possessed were:

He hurried his feet onto the path of righteousness. **Psalms 42:2-3; “As a heart yearns for brooks of water so does my soul yearn for You, O Elohim, my soul thirsts for You, my flesh pines for You.”**

He often physically washed his hands and associated the action with spiritual cleanliness. **Psalms 26:6; “I will wash my hands in cleanliness and I will go around Your altar, YHWH.”**

He sought solitude by removing himself from worldly pursuits. **Psalms 55:7:8; “I would wonder far off; I would lie down in the dessert.”**

Messiah Yahshua would often find solitary places to pray and commune with YHWH. **Luke 22:41; “(Yahshua) went about a stones through away from (his taught ones), kneeled down and prayed...”**

Purity – King David diligently sought purity. **Psalms 51:12; “Create within me a pure heart, Elohim.”** The intent of purity is that man leaves no room in his heart for the Evil Inclination and conduct himself with intelligence and fear of Elohim, uninfluenced by sin and lust.

Psalms: “The Punisher War Journals”

The Book of Psalms was written in the midst of turbulence and not as a detached memoir of events long past. It is a battle front diary which records the fierce conflict between good and evil.

The style of Psalms is erratic and abrupt, punctuated by sudden cries and pleas for salvation and the like. **Psalms 130:2 “My Lord, listen to my voice, let your ears be attentive to the sound of my please.”**

