

Poetic Books

Poetry was counted as one of the more evolved ways the people of Israel used for communication. The people of Israel was used to using Poetic speech in anything they want to commit to memory.

The writers of the poetic books used this method to show their feelings towards their relationship with God. It was used to illustrate how one should feel and deal emotionally with God.

Examples of Poetic books:

- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Song of Songs
- Ecclesiastes
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Job

Also some of the prayers:

- Jonah's Prayer
- Hannah's Prayer
- St. Mary's Prayer
- Zachariah the Priest's prayer

General Points about Poetic books:

1. The text is targeted to evoke emotions. So beware of trying to interpret things literally.
 - a. The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork
 - i. Here the psalmist praises God through his creation. He is not saying that the heavens or the firmament are actual sentient beings, carrying some action.
2. Beware that not all poetic books (Psalms for example) are intended to portray a dogmatic belief.
 - a. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.
 - i. This doesn't portray a teaching that giving birth is a sin, or that his mother was a sinner. Rather he uses this poetic tone to strongly express that he was a sinner and needed repentance.
3. Note that poetry is characterized with similes, metaphors and exaggerations. So we must strive to understand what's behind this form of speech. So we shouldn't hold on the figure of speech and forget the intended meaning
 - a. The mountains skipped like rams, The little hills like lambs.
 - i. Here he portrays the awesome miracles which preceded the people of Israel as they went out of Egypt.

The Book of Psalms

1. Psalms communicates our feelings towards God and our need for Him.
2. It teaches us his ways

3. It helps us express our feelings in different situations in our life, in happiness, sadness, success, failure, hope, hopelessness, by using the words of the Holy Bible
4. It helps us contemplate on the words of God so we can receive from him grace.

Some Notes on the Psalms

- The Psalms can be categorized as will be shown later.
- Each Psalm has a style or a form which matches the forms of other psalms in the same category
- Each type of the Psalms have a specific goal and meaning in the life of the people of Israel.
- We can't take one verse from the psalm and run with it. Each Psalm should be taken as a unit and understood as a unit.
 - He spoke, and locusts came, Young locusts without number (Ps 105:34)
 - Yes, the Lord will give *what is* good; And our land will yield its increase. (Ps 85:12)
 - Both of these might sound contradictory, but because they're taken out of context. Ps 85 talks about the benefit God gave to the land of Israel as a fulfillment to His promise, while Ps 105 talks about how God dealt with Pharaoh.
- David wrote 73 Psalms, Moses wrote 1, Solomon wrote 2, and the rest are by Assaf and Bany Korah.

The Types of the Psalms

- Despair
 - Personal despair: 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 120, 139, 143
 - Group despair: 12, 44, 80, 94, 137
- Thanksgiving
 - Personal: 18, 20, 32, 40, 66, 92, 116, 118, 138
 - Group: 65, 67, 107, 124, 136
- Praise
 - Praise to God as the creator: 8, 19, 104, 148
 - Praise to God as protector for the people of Israel: 66, 100, 111, 114, 149
 - Praise to God as a Master over History: 33, 103, 113, 147, 146, 145, 117
- Salvation of the People of Israel from the land of Egypt
 - 78, 105, 106, 135, 136
- Celebratory
 - Renewing the covenant: 50, 81
 - Covenant of David: 89, 132
 - Royal Psalms: 18, 2, 21, 20, 45, 72, 101, 110, 144
 - Psalms to enthrone the king: 24, 29, 47, 93, 95, 99
 - Psalms for Zion and Jerusalem: 46, 47, 76, 84, 122, 87
- Wisdom
 - Psalms that praise wisdom: 36, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133
- Trust
 - The main goal is to focus on God the center of our trust in the middle of the hard times. It portrays that God takes care of his people and everyone who trusts in Him and His will has everlasting life.
 - 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 91, 121, 125, 131

The Way to Study the Poetic Books

1. Read multiple times
2. Pinpoint your first impressions so you can share with the psalm writer his feelings. It will help in determining the type of the psalm.
3. Try to understand the situation in which the psalm was written. It will help us associate with it.
4. Search in the Psalm for:
 - a. A complaint that the psalmist raises to God
 - b. A request from God
 - c. Trust portrayed in the psalm
 - d. Dependence on God
 - e. Remembering the work of God
 - f. Waiting for salvation or remembering the salvation of the Lord
 - g. Witnessing, how the psalmist witnesses to God's benefit rendered and how he praises God for it.
5. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - a. What are the emotions the writer is passing through and why?
 - b. Did the emotions in the psalm evolve over time? How?
6. After identifying the emotions in the psalms, ask yourself:
 - a. How did you act and feel when you passed through similar situations? Did your emotions change after reading the psalm.
 - b. Did your emotions towards yourself, towards God and others after studying the psalm?
 - c. How can you use this change in your emotional makeup to affect change in your thoughts, actions, understanding, heart and motivation?
 - d. We have to understand that most likely the result that we get out of studying the psalm is an emotional one, but we must apply that to affect change in ourselves, towards God and others, and putting a request in your prayer to affect real change in your life.

Application

Psalm 57

New King James Version (NKJV)

Prayer for Safety from Enemies

To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."^[a] A Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave.

57 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities have passed by.
2 I will cry out to God Most High,
To God who performs *all things* for me.
3 He shall send from heaven and save me;

He reproaches the one who would swallow me up. *Selah*
God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.

4 My soul *is* among lions;
I lie *among* the sons of men
Who are set on fire,
Whose teeth *are* spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let Your glory *be* above all the earth.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down;
They have dug a pit before me;
Into the midst of it they *themselves* have fallen. *Selah*

7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing and give praise.

8 Awake, my glory!
Awake, lute and harp!
I will awaken the dawn.

9 I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples;
I will sing to You among the nations.

10 For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens,
And Your truth unto the clouds.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let Your glory *be* above all the earth.

Psalm 57

King James Version (KJV)

57 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. *Selah*. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. *Selah*.

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.

9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.

10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.