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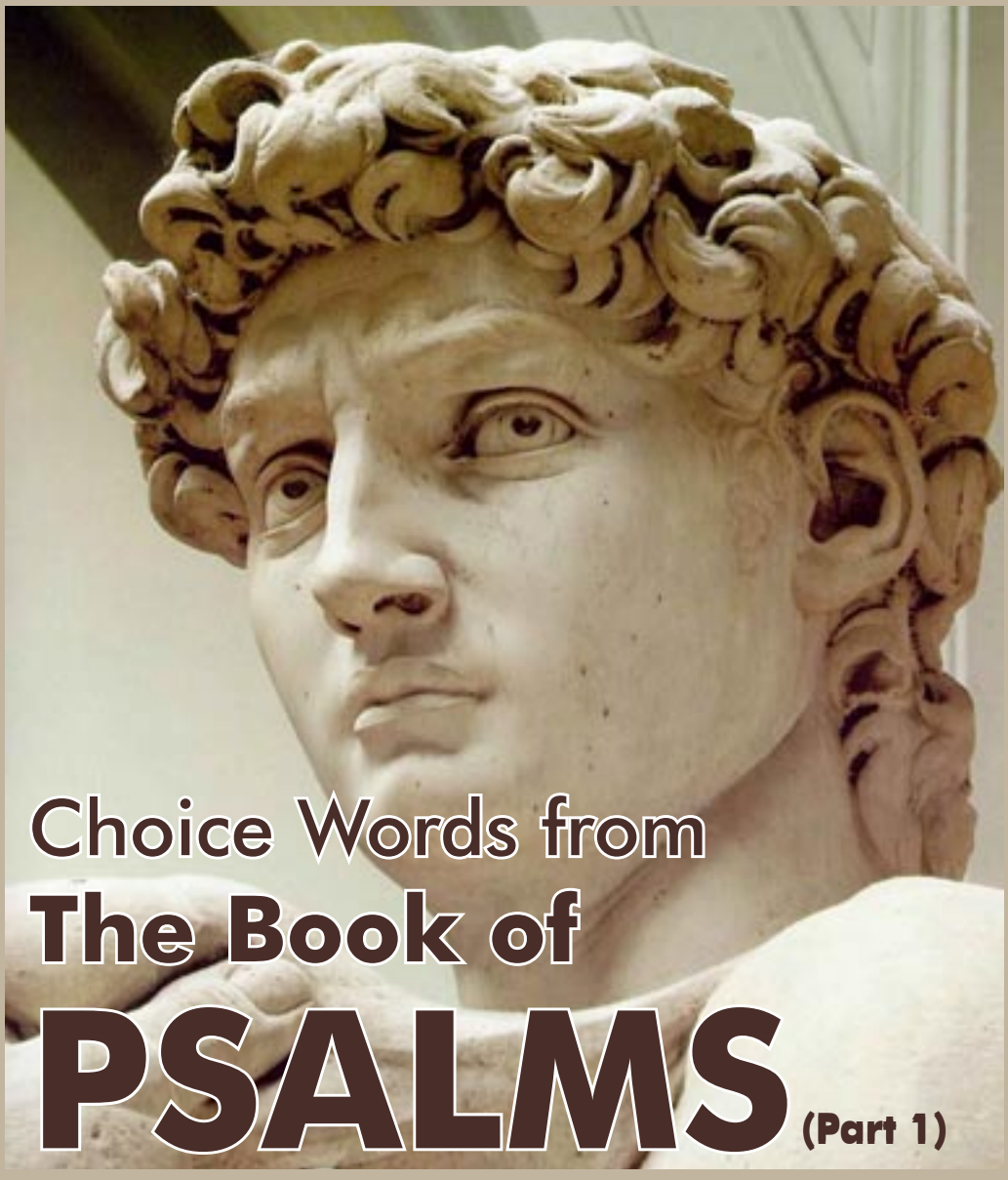
Biblical Hebrew

How to Understand the Ancient Language – Without Having to Learn Hebrew!

Study Book No. 25



Choice Words from The Book of PSALMS (Part 1)

Biblical Hebrew Study Book

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Important Note

The study book you are holding is sanctified due to the holy texts printed in its pages. Please take care of the study book accordingly, and treat it with respect.

Cover Photo:
King David was and remains one of the great inspirations for artists around the world. The most famous sculpture is that of Michelangelo. Every year, millions of people travel to Italy to see it.
As this issue is devoted to the Book of Psalms, we chose its author, King David, for the cover.

Dear Readers,

If you have any questions, or if you'd like us to focus on a specific Biblical word or paragraph, please let us know. Write to us at **yigal@hebrewtoday.com** and we'll try to address your questions, either by email or in the next issue of our Biblical Hebrew Study Book.

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Please note:

The 🎧 symbol (with a number) next to certain articles represents the track number of those articles on the Biblical Hebrew Audio CD. This allows you to listen to the track of your choice with ease.

This Study Book will help you read the Bible in the original Hebrew. Biblical passages are provided in the book, in both Biblical Hebrew and in English, but we recommend that you have your own Hebrew-English copy of the Bible on hand, one that includes the Five Books of Moses (the Torah), as well as the Prophets, and the Writings. This will allow you to look up other texts that are mentioned.

A Few Words from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Now that we've finished discussing the Book of Genesis, we've decided to take a break from the order in the Bible and give you a taste of something different – the Book of Psalms. Many people around the world read the Book of Psalms more often than they read other books in the Bible. They do this at festive events, and at somber occasions, such as ceremonies and funerals.

According to the tradition, the Levites in the Temple would sing the Psalms to the people and the Priests. The Levites would accompany their singing by playing instruments such as the horn, harp and timbrel.

In Hebrew, the book is called the Book of *Tehillim*, which means "praises." However, in other languages, the book's name is translated to mean song or refrain. In Greek, the meaning of the word is a song composed to the sound of a harp.

In earlier times, the book was called "Prayers of David Ben Yishai;" the accepted tradition is that David, King of Israel, wrote the psalms, or at least a large part of them. However this name was not preserved, and in time the book received its present title.

The words and verses we have chosen to focus on are those which are better known to the public. As in our other study books, we bring a central text and analyze selected words from it. In addition, we refer to key words which are repeated several times throughout the book.

We hope that this will help you to better understand these familiar passages and appreciate their beauty even more.

Yigal Tzadka, Editor
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Important Words in the Book of Psalms

In the Book of Psalms, we find some words which appear several times, but their meanings are not so clear. Let us look at some of them here.

מִזְמוֹר (*mizmor*) **A Psalm**

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ

mizmor leDavid bevarcho mipnei Avshalom bno

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son (Psalms 3:1)

The word מִזְמוֹר appears only in the Book of Psalms. It always appears in the first verse of the psalm and it means **psalm** or **song**. But why does it appear so often, 57 times in fact, in this book?
Various commentators think that the word is the title of the psalm. Generally, a name will appear next to this word, usually the name of David.
Consequently, this title is saying that the psalm was written by David or written in his honor.

Please note that in some psalms the word מִזְמוֹר does not appear, but the psalm starts with the name of the composer himself. See for example, in Psalm 25, verse 1:

לְדָוִד אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה נַפְשִׁי אֶשָּׂא

leDavid: Elecha Adonai nafshi esa

[A Psalm] of David. Unto Thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul

Furthermore, in connection with the word מִזִּמּוֹר, let us for a moment look at the following verse:

קְחוּ מִזִּמְרַת הָאָרֶץ בִּכְלֵיכֶם וְהוֹרִידוּ לָאִישׁ מִנְחָה: (2)
מְעַט צֳרִי וּמְעַט דְּבַשׁ נְכֹאת וָלֹט בָּטְנִים וּשְׁקֵדִים

kchu mizimrat ha'arets bichleychem vehoridu la'ish minchah
me'at tsori ume'at dvash nechot valot botnim ushkedim

take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spicery and ladanum, nuts, and almonds (Genesis 43:11)

This verse is from the words of Jacob to his sons. This was after Joseph asked to see Benjamin (his brother) who had not traveled to Egypt with the brothers in search of food for their family. At first, Jacob refused the request, fearing that he would lose the only son left from his beloved wife, Rachel. However the gnawing hunger defeated him and he was persuaded to send the son of his old age.

In order for the journey to succeed, and in order to appease the Egyptian ruler (Joseph), Jacob suggests to his sons to take with them מִזִּמְרַת הָאָרֶץ (*mizimrat ha'arets*) - **choice fruits of the land -** balsam, honey, nuts, almonds etc.

But what is the meaning of the expression מִזִּמְרַת הָאָרֶץ?

Honey - from the choice fruit of the land

As you can see, the word מִזְמֶרֶת resembles the word מִזְמוֹר, leading various commentators to see a deeper connection between these two words. There are those who say that these fruits are the poetry and song of the Land of Israel. Others say that, thanks to the fine and beautiful fruits, the people are happy and sing.
It is interesting to note that in both Biblical Hebrew and in Modern Hebrew, the tool with which branches are cut is called a מַזְמֵרָה (*mazmera*) **pruning shears**. It is as if the shears are part of this "Song of the Land."

In some psalms, instead of the word מִזְמוֹר, we can find the word לַמְנַצֵּחַ (*lamenatse'ach*) and it has a similar function.

לַמְנַצֵּחַ (*lamenatse'ach*) for the Leader

This word appears 56 times in the Bible - 55 of them in the Book of Psalms and once in the Book of Habakkuk. See for example:

לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינוֹת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

lamenatse'ach binginot mizmor leDavid

For the Leader; with string-music. A Psalm of David (Psalms 4:1)

The word has various meanings and translations. In the King James translation, this word is translated as **leader**. Others see in this word a connection with victory, since in Hebrew מְנַצֵּחַ (*menatse'ach)* means a **victor**. One could argue that these two explanations are, in fact, connected - one who is victorious is often the leader.
Another way to interpret the word, is based on the root letters נ-צ-ח. This root means – **forever** or **eternity**. Some commentators say that the word is referring to the Levites who were always on duty, singing the psalms.

Yet another way to understand the verb לְנַצֵּחַ is to **manage, conduct** and **run**. In other words, psalms starting with the word לַמְנַצֵּחַ are intended for an orchestra and this is an instruction for the conductor to read the psalms and conduct the musicians accordingly. Till this day, in Modern Hebrew, the man who leads the musicians in an orchestra is called a מְנַצֵּחַ (*menatse'ach*) **conductor**.

סֶלָה (*sela)* **Sela**

This word appears in the Bible 75 times; 71 of those in the Book of Psalms. (It also appears three times in the Book of Habakkuk and once in the Book of Lamentations.)

לַיהוָה הַיְשׁוּעָה עַל עַמְּךָ בִרְכָתֶךָ סֶלָה (4)

laAdonai hayeshu'a al amcha virchatecha sela

Salvation belongeth unto the LORD; Thy blessing be upon Thy people. Selah

(Psalms 3:9)

In the Book of Psalms, the word *sela* always appears at the end of the passages/songs. However, in both Biblical and Modern Hebrew there is no clear cut explanation of this word. This might explain why the translation simply writes *sela* and does not actually translate the word. There are many commentaries on this subject, but no one can establish its meaning for certain.

Some say that it expresses a signature word, a final word for what has been said before it, such as forever, or as affirmation that the words are true. In a certain way, we can consider the words *Amen* and *Sela* as words expressing the same idea.
Other scholars think the word is not a part of the song, but rather an instruction to the singers how to sing its ending. Like: sing louder, or: sing slower. Since we are dealing with a book of songs, this too is a plausible explanation.

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת (*shir lama'alot*) **A Song of Ascents**

This word evokes the action of **going up**, and is translated accordingly in English. In Hebrew however, this word has an additional meaning – **steps**. Commentators say that this refers to the actual steps at the entrance to the Temple. The Levites stood on these steps and sang the various Psalms. There are 14 psalms which begin with "Shir Hama'alot" and one with "Shir Lama'alot" (Psalm 121), and from this commentators understand that there were 15 steps upon which the Levites stood. According to the scholars, the builders of the Temple took care to lay exactly 15 steps in order to match these 15 psalms. These steps connected the two parts of the Temple - one part was the place the public was allowed to enter, and the other place was higher – the place where only the Priests and Levites had access to.
The Hebrew language shows the honor and esteem we have for the Temple, Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, by calling everyone who comes to these places עוֹלֶה לְרֶגֶל (*oleh leregel*) **Pilgrim**. That is to say, a

Other commentators think that this is an affectionate term for a poem likening it to a spot of gold. This is because in the word מִכְתָּם we can find the word כֶּתֶם (*ketem*) which means **gold** in Biblical Hebrew. In Modern Hebrew it means **spot, mark, stain**.
Linguists think that the origin of the word is Akkadian, and that it means – to **cover**. According to them, this word is perhaps connected to the ceremony of atonement for sins, or another ceremony of purification, for which the poem is suited.

הַלְלוּיָהּ (*Halleluya*) **Hallelujah**

The word הַלְלוּיָהּ appears in the Bible 24 times. This word is actually made up from two Hebrew words:
הַלְלוּ = praise (pl) ye
יָהּ = Lord
For more about this word, see Biblical Hebrew study book number 8.

The Source (Psalms 1:1~6)

1. אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ *Ashrei ha'ish*	1. Happy is the man
אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים; *asher lo halach ba'atsat resha'im*	that hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד *uwederech chata'im lo amad*	nor stood in the way of sinners
וּבְמוֹשַׁב לֵצִים לֹא יָשָׁב. *uvemoshav letsim lo yashav.*	nor sat in the seat of the scornful.
2. כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חֶפְצוֹ; *Ki im betorat Adonai cheftso*	2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD;
וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה. *uwetorato yeh'geh yomam valaila.*	and in His law doth he meditate day and night.
3. וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שָׁתוּל *Vehaya ke'ets shatul*	3. And he shall be like a tree planted
עַל פַּלְגֵי מָיִם: *al palgey mayim*	by streams of water,
אֲשֶׁר פִּרְיוֹ יִתֵּן בְּעִתּוֹ *asher piryo yiten be'ito*	that bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
וְעָלֵהוּ לֹא יִבּוֹל; *ve'alehu lo yibol*	and whose leaf doth not wither;
וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה יַצְלִיחַ. *vechol asher ya'aseh yatsli'ach.*	and in whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper.

4. לֹא כֵן הָרְשָׁעִים:	4. Not so the wicked;
Lo chen haresha'im	
כִּי אִם כַּמֹּץ	but they are like the chaff
ki im kamots	
אֲשֶׁר תִּדְּפֶנּוּ רוּחַ.	which the wind driveth away.
asher tidfenu ru'ach.	
5. עַל כֵּן	5. Therefore
Al ken	
לֹא יָקֻמוּ רְשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט;	the wicked shall not stand in the judgment,
lo yakumu resha'im bamishpat	
וְחַטָּאִים בַּעֲדַת צַדִּיקִים.	nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
vechata'im ba'adat tsadikim.	
6. כִּי יוֹדֵעַ יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ צַדִּיקִים;	6. For the LORD regardeth the way of the righteous;
Ki yode'a Adonai derech tsadikim	
וְדֶרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים תֹּאבֵד.	but the way of the wicked shall perish.
vederech resha'im toved.	

Possessive Pronouns

שֶׁלִּי	שֶׁלָּנוּ	שֶׁלְּךָ	שֶׁלָּךְ	שֶׁלָּכֶם	שֶׁלָּכֶן	שֶׁלּוֹ	שֶׁלָּהּ	שֶׁלָּהֶם	שֶׁלָּהֶן
my	**our/s**	**your/s**	**your/s**	**your/s**	**your/s**	**his**	**her/s**	**their/s**	**their/s**

Selected Words from the Source

אַשְׁרֵי (*ashrei*) **Happy** (1:1)

The Book of Psalms praises the righteous man. The word אַשְׁרֵי expresses **joy** and **happiness**.

According to the verse, if a person distances himself from wicked people and engages in study of the Torah, he is a happy man, and his life is good and happy.

To be more precise, in Hebrew, the word does not simply express happiness, but rather a greater joy – **bliss**.

The Parma Psalter, 1870.

Many commentators point out that this word also expresses **affirmation**, as if the psalm is saying: true, the righteous man will be like a tree on a stream.

To bolster this idea, they bring the words of Leah after Zilpah (Leah's maidservant) gave birth to her son Asher, the eighth of Jacob's sons:

וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה בְּאָשְׁרִי כִּי אִשְּׁרוּנִי בָנוֹת;
וַתִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ אָשֵׁר

vatomer Leah be'oshri ki ishruni banot vatikra et shmo Asher

And Leah said: 'Happy am I! for the daughters will call me happy.'
And she called his name Asher (Genesis 30:12-13)

With this birth, it is as if Leah is happy for receiving approval from the other women. Since Zilpah was her maidservant, Zilpah's son was, as it were, Leah's son. With Asher's birth, Leah is sure that her position as the principal wife in the family is secure.

Symbol of the tribe of Asher. Synagogue in Beit-El

This teaches us about the covert struggle that existed among the wives of Jacob which found expression in the births of their children; the name of Asher expresses part of this struggle. Some translations use the word **Blessed** as a positive commentary for a person who stays away from the wicked.

Please note that in the English translation it is difficult to glean Leah's play on words. The translators used the word happy and do not refer to the word אֹשֶׁר (*ishur*) **approval, authorization.**

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NIKUD DICTION	אוּ	אֻ	אוֹ	אֹ	אֱ	אֶ	אֵ	אִי	אִ	אְ	אֱ	אַ	אָ
	oo	oo	oh	oh	eh	eh	eh	ee	ee	o	o	a	ah	ah

In Modern Hebrew we can find the following words which also derive from the root פ-ל-ג:

Ancient Roman ship.

* הַפְלָגָה (*haflaga*) **cruise, sailing.**
This action disconnects us from dry land and separates us from the place we were before.
* מִפְלָגָה (*miflaga*) **political party.**
A politically defined group of people, distinct from the other acting parties.
* פְּלֻגָּה (*pluga*) **company (military unit).**
A group of soldiers working as an independent unit, which is clearly separate from the other parts of the army.

כַּמֹּץ (*kamots*) **like the chaff** (1:4)

First, let us point out that the main word is מוֹץ (*mots*). The letter כ which comes before it means - **like the**.
This word describes one of the things that are useless for humans – chaff. This part of the produce only gets in the farmer's way and he must work to get rid of it.
The way the farmer separates the chaff is by throwing the produce into the air; since the chaff is lightweight it blows away, whereas the grains fall down at the farmer's feet. Likening the wicked people to chaff

א.ה.ו.י.

sound. In the word יֶלֶד, the 'י functions as a consonant and is
, are not pronounced as consonants. They are silent.

precisely to this trait of the chaff - just as the chaff is light and easily blown away, so too the wicked persons are frivolous and lightweight. And just as the chaff blows away with the wind and nobody misses its presence, so too this will happen to the wicked, according to this imagery.

Farmers separate the chaff.

יָקוּמוּ (*yakumu*) **stand** (1:5)

The regular meaning of this word is **stand**. However, in higher-level Hebrew the meaning refers to **resurrection**. In our verse, it means that those same wicked people and sinners will have no standing or even existence in the places of justice where the righteous stand.

בַּעֲדַת (*ba'adat*) **in the congregation of** (1:5)

The translation which we bring here from the King James Bible is correct and exact. But the Biblical Hebrew expands our insights regarding that congregation.

A congregation does not have to be an orderly community of people. This group can organize and band ad-hoc for a certain issue and then disperse immediately afterwards. In order to further clarify this, let us for a moment recall the story of Korah (Numbers 16).

As you recall, Korah and a group of people complained to Moses concerning his leadership. They felt that Moses thought himself more

important than the others and had put himself into a higher position. It was a serious dispute and occupies a prominent place in the story of the Israelites wandering in the desert. When Moses responded to Korah and his group, in 16:5, the text says:

וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל קֹרַח וְאֶל כָּל עֲדָתוֹ (12)

vaydaber el Korach ve'el kol adato

And he spoke unto Korah and unto all his company

What is the meaning of the word עֲדָתוֹ (*adato*)? This is a group of people who decided to act against their leader separately from the rest of the nation. However, it is worth noting what Korah and his people themselves said to Moses in verse 3:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב לָכֶם כִּי כָל הָעֵדָה כֻּלָּם קְדֹשִׁים

vayomeru alehem rav lachem ki chol ha'edah kulam kedoshim

take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them

Korah and his Group Fall into the Ground.

Here Korah and his group do not separate themselves from the people and call the whole nation עֵדָה (*edah*). Korah's people knew what they were doing – in order to win the public approval, they spoke in the name of the whole nation, even though they constituted a small group out of the whole.

Incidentally, because of this story of Korah, the word וַעֲדָתוֹ subsequently acquired a negative connotation in the Hebrew language. When one wants to speak about someone's negative group of people, they can use this word. It is often used in politics; one might describe a politician and his cohorts, meaning a politician with his band of negative people around him. Modern linguists see in the word עֵדָה an expression of an alliance between people. Korah's people were a group who decided to act together and apparently made an alliance between them, which made them into a group of

The Earth Swallows Up Korah, Dathan and Abiram. The Story of the Bible. F.B. Schell, 1873.

people with a commitment to one another.

Nowadays, the word עֵדָה expresses a homogenous group of immigrants. For example, the people of the Persian, Moroccan, Ethiopian, Romanian and Iraqi communities, and so forth. This means that they are a specific group among the Jews. In this context, the term עֵדָה is not negative as in the case of Korah and his congregation, and merely indicates one's background.

Activity

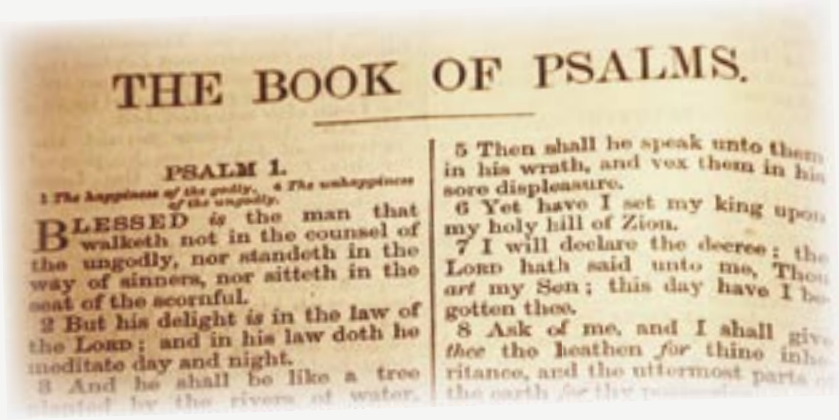
The English text below is the translation of a verse from our selected source. Write the correct word or phrase next to the Hebrew words in the spaces below. *Check your answers on page 42.*

1. Happy is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor stood in the way of sinners nor sat in the seat of the scornful.

1. הָלַךְ _____
2. דָּרָךְ _____
3. חַטָּאִים _____
4. יָשָׁב _____
5. לֵצִים _____
6. עֵצַת _____
7. אִישׁ _____
8. מוֹשַׁב _____
9. עָמַד _____
10. רְשָׁעִים _____

Did You Know?

* The Book of Psalms features the shortest chapter in the Bible – chapter 117 with just two verses.
* On the other hand, the longest book in the Bible is also in the Book of Psalms - chapter 119 has 176 verses.
* Psalm 118 in the Book of Psalms is the middle chapter of the Bible.
* The Book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible.
* Tradition ascribes the writing of the Book of Psalms to King David, but various chapters were written in the years after his death and are attributed to other writers, such as King Solomon.
* 73 of the Psalms begin with the words מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד (*mizmor leDavid*).
* The Psalms can be divided into three main groups: personal psalms, psalms of national theme and psalms of faith.
* This book is different from the other books of the Bible in that it gives powerful expression to longing and love of God. It gives the feeling that it is possible get close to the Creator and that He intervenes in human affairs.



THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

PSALM 1.

1 The happiness of the godly. 4 The unhappiness of the ungodly.

BLESSED *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts

King David's Tomb

According to tradition, King David's tomb is located in a large compound on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. All three monotheistic faiths uphold this tradition and the Christians believe that this site also contains the room where the Last Supper was held. Needless to say, the fact that all three religions believe in the same tradition, associated with a particular place, causes tension between the believers with regards to the site.

The death of King David is described in Kings I, 2:10 with the words "and David slept with his fathers and was buried in the City of David." This description, which mentions the fathers of the deceased, tells us that David was buried in a family tomb. Back then these tombs were actually burial caves. The Bible similarly describes the death of other kings of the

Tomb of David on Mount Zion. Frank S De Hass, 1887.

Davidic Dynasty, and it can be assumed that they all were buried in the same place. However, if you come to the site nowadays, you will not find a burial cave there. Yet, various examinations indicate that beneath the huge gravesite there is apparently a cave and this reinforces the tradition of this being the location of the Davidic burial plot.
The graves of the House of David are mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah as a well-known and familiar landmark. Testimonies from the Second Temple period which describe the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 AD, tell of the grave being robbed a number of times in order to pay royal debts. The grave is also mentioned in the New Testament, as well as in Roman history books. But with the destruction of Jerusalem, the graves were destroyed together with the important monuments. One thousand years later, the tradition stating that the tomb of King David is on Mount Zion became set and agreed upon till this very day.

Incidentally, in 1951, a scholar named Jacob Finkler researched the structure. He dug to a depth of 70 centimeters and discovered a colorful mosaic floor from the Roman period. He also found a niche facing towards the Temple Mount. He came to the conclusion that the place was an ancient synagogue which was apparently close to the tomb plot.

A view of Mount Zion, the burial site of King David.

Over the course of its history, the tomb site has been under different ownerships. For many years it was under Christian ownership.
In 1452, the control of the tomb passed over to the Mamluk Sultan. This happened after long arguments between the three religions over maintenance of the tomb and the use of it. The sultan, of course, wished to keep the peace, but more than this, he wanted to transfer the ownership of the site to the Muslims. And he wrote thus: "We Muslims revere King David like the Christians and the Jews. We also believe in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore... this place will belong to us."
From that moment onwards, the Muslims prevented the Christians and Jews from entering the area of the tomb. This prohibition was strictly enforced until the 20th century.

In 1920, the site was still under the Muslim control, and an Arab family named Dajani took care the place. However, the British, who ruled the Land of Israel in those days, forced the Dajani family to allow people of all faiths to access the site. And so, after years of being kept away, the Jews and Christians returned. However, they did not know that the tomb where they prayed was in fact a fake tomb.
This was not discovered until 1948, when the control of Mount Zion passed over to the State of Israel. The soldiers who entered the site found two graves; the Dajani family had presented a different and false grave to the Christians and Jews. The family, loyal to the Muslim tradition, didn't want members of the other faiths to come to the tomb. Therefore, they constructed another tomb nearby. The Israeli soldiers marked the way to the real tomb and wrote on it:

דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל חַי וְקַיָּם

which means **David, King of Israel, is alive and well.**

One can see this fake tomb still today. It is next to the room which is believed to have been the site of the Last Supper, and above the real tomb.

The fake tomb

Between the years 1948 and 1967, Jerusalem was divided. Access to the Western Wall was denied, and so the tomb of David became the holiest place for Jews. Many came there, climbed up on the roof and prayed in the direction of the Temple. In addition, one standing on the roof of the building could see the huge Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives quite clearly. Many people used to come to the site in order to have visual contact with their family members' graves.

During the festivals, huge celebrations were held at Mount Zion, when people from all over Israel would make a pilgrimage. They would come with Torah scrolls and dance and have long processions. They would pray and create a great religious happening.

After the Six Day War, with the reunification of Jerusalem, the tomb lost some of its importance. The Jews preferred to return to the Western Wall and the Christians preferred praying at their holy sites. Even on religious festivals, only few come to the site which has declined in its greatness. Only during the festival of *Shavuot* (The Feast of Weeks), which according to tradition is the day King David was born and died, does the place once again regain some of its former glory. People come to recite Psalms, and some light 150 candles in honor of the 150 Psalms of David. Today, after over one thousand years of vicissitudes, the tomb site is finally quiet. People from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths all visit and pray there.

Word of the Month

אַשְׁפָּה (*ashpa*)

אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר מִלֵּא אֶת אַשְׁפָּתוֹ מֵהֶם (14)

לֹא יֵבֹשׁוּ כִּי יְדַבְּרוּ אֶת אוֹיְבִים בַּשָּׁעַר

ashrei hagever asher mileh et ashpato mehem lo yevoshu ki yedabru et oyvim basha'ar

Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be put to shame, when they speak with their enemies in the gate (Psalms 127:5)

מְקִימִי מֵעָפָר דָּל מֵאַשְׁפֹּת יָרִים אֶבְיוֹן

mekimi me'afar dal me'ashpot yarim evyon

Who raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill (Psalms 113:7)

These two verses contain an interesting Modern Hebrew word – אַשְׁפָּה (*ashpa*) and in the plural form אַשְׁפּוֹת (*ashpot*). However, it important to notice that the words are referring to two different things.

The first verse speaks about a **quiver** of arrows - the vessel that used to hang on the warrior's back. This quiver held the arrows and the warrior drew them out rapidly when he wanted to shoot.

In the second verse we find the word אַשְׁפָּה in its plural form. This time it refers to another אַשְׁפָּה - which is **rubbish** or **trash**. The verse describes how God raises the poor from the dust, and lifts them out of the rubbish. So, in fact, we have one word with two different meanings – a quiver of arrows and trash.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yigal Tzadka has been dealing with teaching both Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew for over twenty years. Beginning with his days as a student of archaeology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and later on as a tour guide in Jerusalem, the author has constantly dealt with the combination of archaeology, the history of the Land of Israel and the Bible.

In addition, the author taught Hebrew to new immigrants and to visiting tourists. In light of the great demand, Mr. Tzadka founded the Modern Hebrew teaching newspapers - *Yanshuf* and *Bereshit*. These newspapers also include sections on Biblical Hebrew and its influence on Modern Hebrew. It was these newspapers and the requests of readers that led to the birth of the Biblical Hebrew Study Books.

"People do not have to know Hebrew in order to learn from these books," says Tzadka. "This method explains everything, so people are able to understand the Biblical language and its meaning even if they do not know how to read Hebrew. We deal with the meaning and significance of the most interesting words and expressions. After readers understand the meaning of these words, their enjoyment and experience of reading the Bible is greatly enhanced. That is my greatest satisfaction and reward."

The study books are used by many Bible study groups around the world in order to enrich their knowledge and pleasure of the Bible.

Yigal Tzadka was born and raised in the city of Jerusalem and continues to reside there with his family.