

The Psalms of

THE SONS OF KORAH



INTRODUCTION

On the journey of our lives there are moments that will come to define us. When we are young many of us pay little attention to these moments as we charge headlong into the future. As we age we tend to slow down and become more introspective, and so it is sometimes not until we reach our later years that we look back on these moments with greater clarity and recognize the impact that they have had on us.

At the end of his life, as he blessed his son Joseph, Jacob appealed to "the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day" (Gen. 48:15 NET). What have been the pivotal moments in your life? How have they changed you? When you reflect on the course of your life, can you see God at work?

The sons of Korah were a family in Israel that would endure for many generations. When the various references to this family throughout the Bible are examined in relation to each other the record of scripture paints a picture of remarkable dedication maintained for over a thousand years.

During this time the nation of Israel displayed a notable inconsistency, alternating between righteousness and apostasy. Not so the sons of Korah. When the people turned away after other gods, the Korahites remained faithful to Yahweh. When the people invariably turned back to their God, this family was there to assist in the spiritual revival. What was the secret to their consistency?

There was one thing that every member of this faithful family shared; they were all defined by the same moment. This moment was a stain on their lineage. It was a source of great shame and a reminder of where they came from. Every new generation of Korahites would be told the story of their infamous ancestor, their rebellious patriarch. He wasn't content with what God had given him. He had led a great many in Israel to their deaths on the day when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them alive. This one moment would define their lives for a thousand years and more. They would never forget.

We know some Bible characters only by their actions. As we read about their lives we are left to speculate about what their thoughts may have been. In His wisdom, God has chosen to allow us inside the minds of the sons of Korah. He has given us their psalms, of which there are twelve: Psalms 42-49, 84, 85, 87 and 88. In them we find sorrow, longing, insecurity, fear, hope, faith and love. Perhaps we will find some of ourselves in them as well.

In our study of the psalms of the sons of Korah we will alternate between their family history and their psalms. Of their psalms we will examine six: Psalms 42-44, 84, 85 and 87.

We encourage the use of electronic aids as you endeavor to complete this study. If you are unfamiliar with which tools are available we would recommend the use of *e-Sword*. It is free to download and provides helpful search features and tools. It is available at <http://www.e-sword.net/downloads.html>.

We have found the following books to be helpful during this study:

Exploring the Psalms by Bro. Mark Vincent

Psalms – Volume 2 (Psalms 42-72), published by CSSS

Psalms – Volume 3 (Psalms 73-106), published by CSSS

The Sons of Korah their Faith and their Psalms by Bro. Jonathan Cope

A Handbook to the Psalms by Bro. Ern Wilson

Studies in the Psalms, Volume 1 by Bro. Cyril Tennant

"A day in thy courts is better than a thousand"

The Praises of Israel, Volume 1 (Psalms 1-72) by Bro. Dudley Fifield

The Praises of Israel, Volume 2 (Psalms 73-106) by Bro. Dudley Fifield

Psalms 1-72, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, by Derek Kidner

Psalms 73-150, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, by Derek Kidner

You may also find the following recordings of Bible classes to be of use:

The Sons of Korah – Guarding the Value of Moral Holiness by Bro. Roger Lewis

Life and Times of Phinehas by Bro. Roger Lewis

Exhortations on the Edge of the Kingdom by Bro. Ron Cowie

People in the Life of Moses by Bro. Michael Owen

Please feel free to communicate with us about the study. If you have questions, want clarification or simply want to share something interesting, please don't hesitate to send us an email.

We have found these servants of God to be remarkable for their ability to find joy in times of mourning, conviction during eras of apostasy and courage in the face of adversity. If we can grasp even a tiny piece of what motivated this family and make it our own, then our time will have been well spent. As you delve into the legacy of this faithful family we hope that you will find yourself inspired to reflect God's character more brightly.

May God bless you in your study of His word.

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FAMILY TREE

The Sons of Korah Genealogy Challenge

How important is your family tree to you? To some of us, who we are descended from might not matter very much, while others might find it fascinating. Would you be proud to find out that you are descended from a famous king or a great explorer? Would you be ashamed if you discovered that you have an infamous criminal in your family line several hundred years removed?

Practically speaking, we know that we are each responsible for ourselves and not guilty of the sins of others. The Apostle Paul wrote that everyone "will have to bear [their] own load" (Gal. 6:5).

We live in a society that doesn't place any real value on who we are descended from. Imagine living in a society where the opposite is true. Picture a society where your family line will determine where you live, what you own, and in some cases what your profession will be. Would you be more interested in whom your ancestors were? This was reality for the children of Israel.

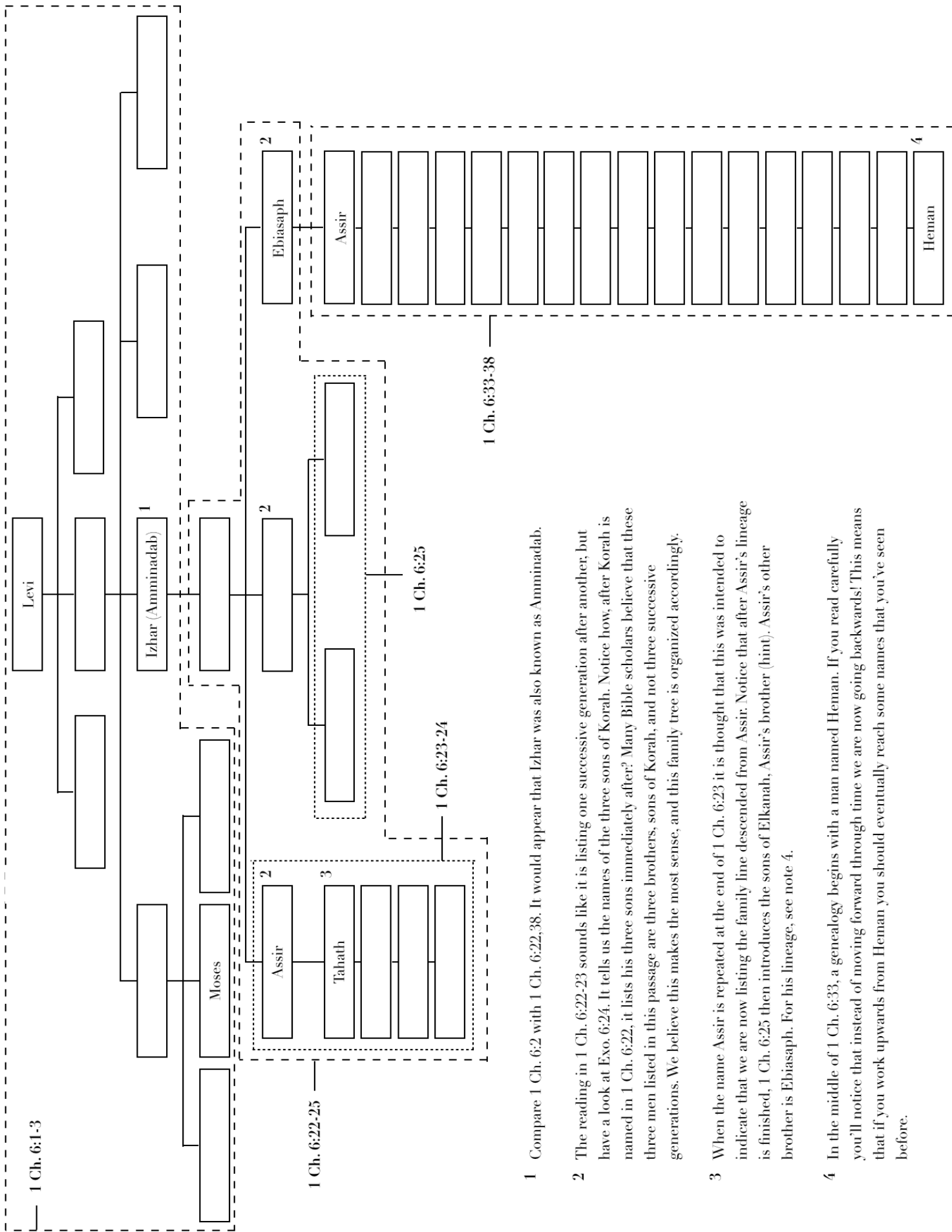
We can understand, then, why the Bible contains so many genealogies. Good record keeping was extremely important for very practical reasons. We are going to find out that it is important for spiritual reasons as well.

If we want to understand the family that will be referred to as the "sons of Korah" and the "Korahites", one of the first things we want to do is try to assemble their family tree. This is going to be important throughout our study and we will refer to it throughout the book to help us out.

The family tree of the Korahites is one of the more complex genealogies recorded. Bible scholars have differing views on what it should look like. Once you get into this exercise you will see what we mean. It isn't going to be easy. This is why we have called it the "Genealogy Challenge".

On the next page you will find the structure of the family tree laid out with a few of the names filled in. Your job is to fill in all of the empty boxes. Use the passages from 1 Chron. 6 that are indicated beside each section. Pay special attention to the footnotes, as these will be crucial to understanding some tricky areas.

We also want you to know that this layout isn't necessarily correct, but that it is the one that we believe is most likely true. We will not be basing any part of this study on the precise structure of the family tree. What *will* be important throughout this study are some of the members of this family and the general chronology.



1 Compare 1 Ch. 6:2 with 1 Ch. 6:22,38. It would appear that Izhar was also known as Amminadab.

2 The reading in 1 Ch. 6:22-23 sounds like it is listing one successive generation after another, but have a look at Exo. 6:24. It tells us the names of the three sons of Korah. Notice how, after Korah is named in 1 Ch. 6:22, it lists his three sons immediately after? Many Bible scholars believe that these three men listed in this passage are three brothers, sons of Korah, and not three successive generations. We believe this makes the most sense, and this family tree is organized accordingly.

3 When the name Assir is repeated at the end of 1 Ch. 6:23 it is thought that this was intended to indicate that we are now listing the family line descended from Assir. Notice that after Assir's lineage is finished, 1 Ch. 6:25 then introduces the sons of Elkanah, Assir's brother (hint). Assir's other brother is Ebiasaph. For his lineage, see note 4.

4 In the middle of 1 Ch. 6:33, a genealogy begins with a man named Heman. If you read carefully you'll notice that instead of moving forward through time we are now going backwards! This means that if you work upwards from Heman you should eventually reach some names that you've seen before.

Now that the family tree is in place, let's take a closer look at it. We haven't yet considered the rebellion of Korah, but even without knowing the story there are some things that we can find out about this family just by looking at their genealogy.

1. In what way was Korah related to Moses, Aaron and Miriam?
2. When we refer to the "sons of Korah" we are usually referring to all of the descendants of Korah throughout many generations. We can see from the family tree, and from Exo. 6:24, that he had three actual sons. What were their names?
3. The meanings of names were important in many ancient societies and this was especially true with the Israelites. When a parent named their child, that name often had special meaning to the parents. Research the names of Korah's sons. What do they mean?
4. When a name continues to be used in a family throughout multiple generations, we refer to it as a "family name". Chances are good that either you are named after a member of your family from an earlier generation, or you know someone who is. Looking at the family tree, write down all of the names that are used multiple times by the Korahites.
5. Research each of the names that you wrote down as Korahite family names from question 4. What do they mean?
6. Consider the meanings of these names. These are at least some of the names that the sons of Korah chose to take as common family names. What do you think the meanings of these names tells us about how this family, the sons of Korah, felt about themselves and about their place in relation to God and to the rest of the nation of Israel?

7. Browse through the last six questions and your answers to them. In light of what we have considered, and also remembering that this family would become known as the "sons of Korah", what one name stands out as only ever being used once?

8. In 1 Chron. 6:33 the scriptural genealogical record changes things up and works backwards from a man named Heman. He must have been important to have been given this kind of attention in the midst of so many names. Something else sets him apart from the other names listed in this chapter, something found right in 1 Chron. 6:33. What are we told about him here?

9. Have a look at 1 Chron. 6:39-43. Which son of Levi was Asaph descended from and where did he stand in relation to Heman?

10. Now have a look at 1 Chron. 6:44-47. Which son of Levi was Ethan descended from and where did he stand in relation to Heman?

11. Given your answers to the previous two questions, where does this mean Heman stood in relation to Asaph and Ethan? What do you think this means about his position and authority when it came to the job that these three men were given?

12. Find Heman in 1 Chron. 15. Who was the king of Israel at that time that commanded the Levites to appoint singers and musicians from among their number?

13. There is one psalm that bears Heman's name. Which psalm is it?

14. This is a beautiful and heartbreaking psalm. Read it for yourself. What do you think it tells you about the author?

15. As well known as Heman must have been, he almost certainly was not as famous as his grandfather. Who was his grandfather? *If you are using the King James Version the name might not be immediately familiar. Other Bible versions can help here. (Hint: compare the genealogy in 1 Chron. 6:33-34 with 1 Sam. 1:1,20 and remember that sometimes Hebrew names can have slight spelling variations.)*

Good Bible study is all about asking good questions. Write down some of the questions you have about this family tree:

The genealogy of the sons of Korah doesn't end with Heman, that's just as far as 1 Chron. 6 takes us. 1 Chron. 25:5 tells us that Heman had fourteen sons and three daughters. Consider as well that this is just one branch of the Korahite family tree. We know, in fact, that this family was very involved in the repopulation and rebuilding of Jerusalem after the exile, hundreds of years later. We get glimpses of them throughout the Old Testament doing all kinds of remarkable things. We're getting ahead of ourselves though. We'll get there. For now, let's begin at the beginning...

THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE SONS OF KORAH

As Levites, the sons of Korah were given roles related to the worship service in Israel. They would be assigned additional tasks over time as both their family and the nation of Israel grew. In order to get better acquainted with the Korahites, let's get familiar with their roles and responsibilities throughout the course of their history.

1. Levi had three sons. Refer to the Korahite family tree on page 4. From which of these sons were the sons of Korah descended?
2. Read Num. 3:17-37. This is a record of the original roles of the Levites during the wilderness wanderings. Taking into account your answer to the previous question, outline below the responsibilities of the sons of Korah.
3. During his reign as king, David instructed that singers be appointed from among the ranks of the Levites. You will find this recorded in 1 Chron. 15:16-24. Which famous son of Korah was selected for this calling? (*Hint: you will recognize him from both the family tree that you have completed and from several questions in the "Family Tree" section of the workbook.*)

The appointment of this notable son of Korah as a leader of singers would mark the beginning of a long line of Korahite singers. The fact that we are studying many of their psalms some three thousand years later is a witness to the skill with which they wrote and composed music. More significant still, it is a testament of their faith and their commitment to God.

4. We also find the sons of Korah among the porters. Research the Hebrew word used in the Bible for porter. What did the porters do?
5. Count the number of porters that guarded the various gates and storehouses in Jerusalem, recorded in 1 Chron. 26:17-18. How many were there?

6. No individual Levite served as a porter on a full time basis. They served in shifts. Refer to 1 Chron. 9:25. How long did the shifts last?

7. Some of the sons of Korah who served as porters are described in 1 Chron. 26:6-9. Research the words used to describe them. What do we learn about them?

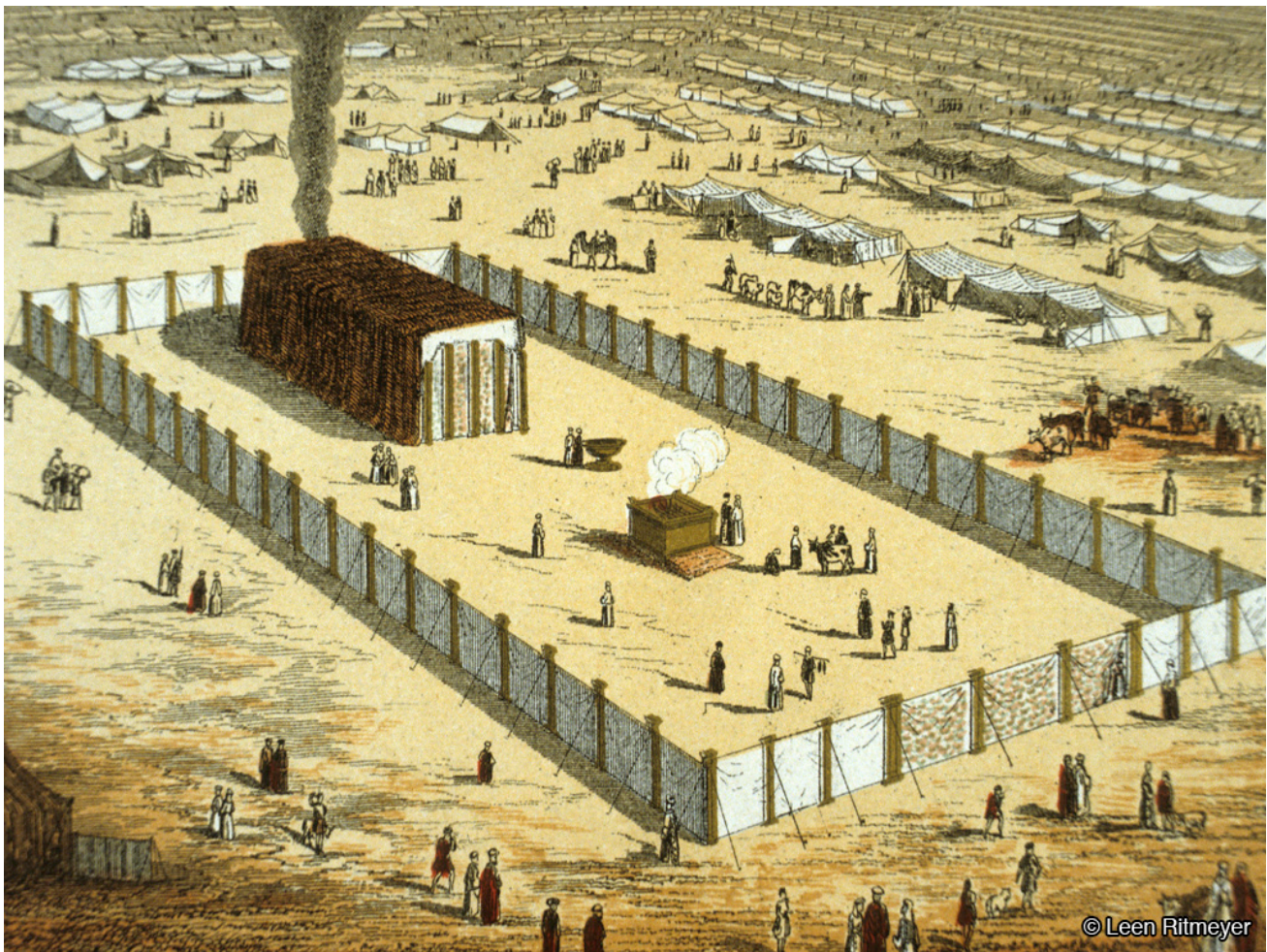
It is interesting to note that the sons of Korah seemed to excel at the tasks that they performed. Certainly our skill at any given task is not a measure of our righteousness. However, we tend to be best at the things that we throw ourselves into – the things that we are passionate about. As we study the history of this family and examine their psalms, we will begin to see not only how passionate this family was about serving God, but also why they were so invested in their work of service.

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going" (Ecc. 9:10).

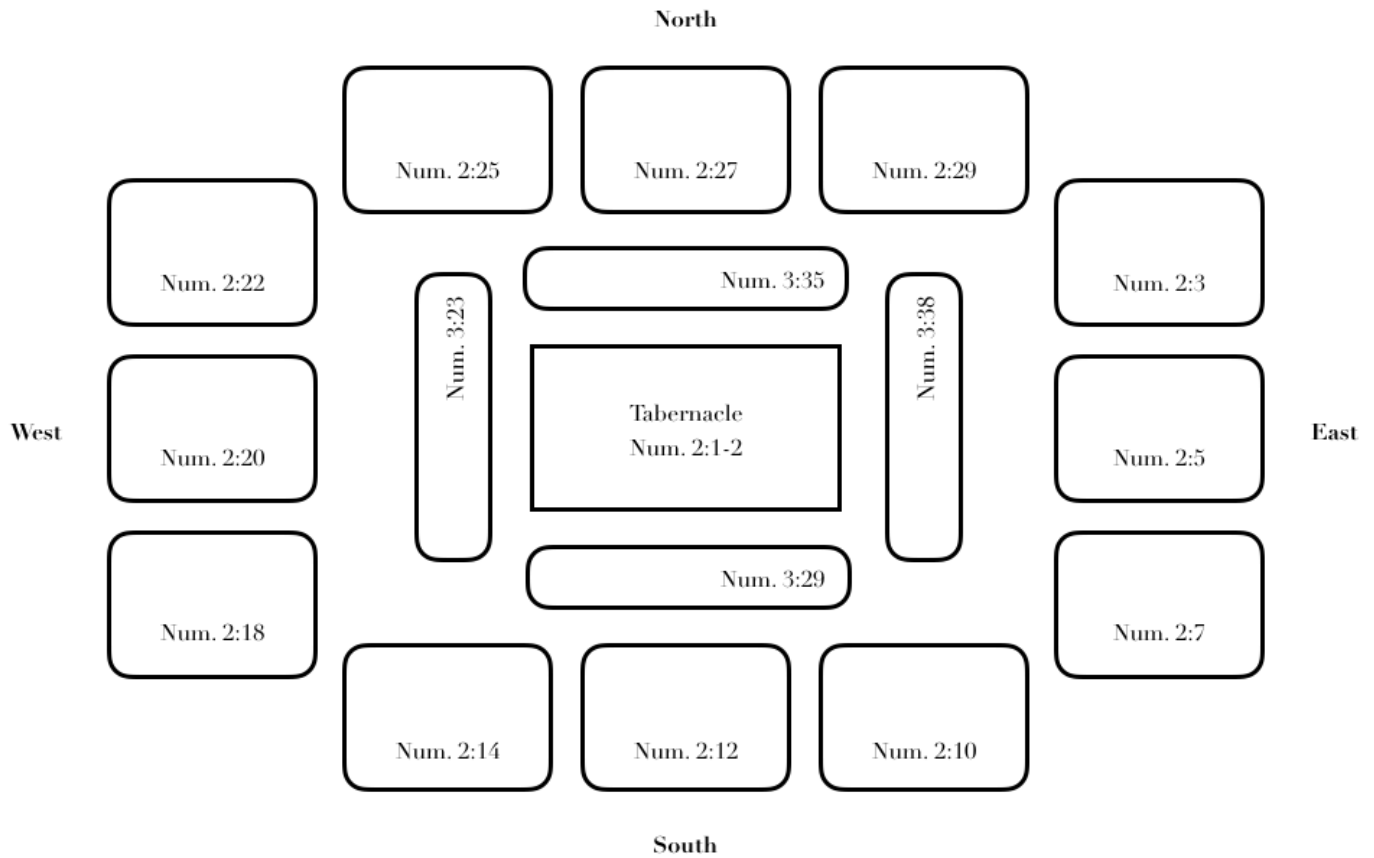
NUMBERS 16: THE REBELLION

Setting the scene for rebellion

We are about to study the account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. We want to picture the scene as vividly as possible. To do so, we are going to try to visualize the camp of the Israelites in the wilderness as Numbers chapters 2 and 3 tell us it would have looked. We are told that the children of Israel camped around the tabernacle in a specific pattern. Below is a rendering by brother Leen Ritmeyer of what this might have looked like.



1. The layout on the next page depicts the camp of Israel, as shown above and as described in Numbers 2 and 3. The tribes were camped around the tabernacle, three to a side. The families of the Levites were camped beside the tabernacle, between it and the rest of the tribes. Using each of the references listed below, fill in the boxes with the tribes and the families of the Levites respectively.



- In Num. 16:1 we read about the men who will organize the rebellion against Moses and his family. Korah belongs to the family of the Kohathites and is from the tribe of Levi. Dathan, Abiram and On all belong to the tribe of Reuben. When we look at the map of the camp that has just been filled out above, what do we notice about where the Kohathites and the Reubenites "lived" in relation to one another?
- Consider your answer to question 2. Now read what these groups did and said next in Num. 16:2-3. With the understanding that you now have of where they camped every day in relation to each other, describe how you think it came to be that these two groups decided to join forces to act out against Moses and Aaron. (*Hint: refer to 1 Cor. 15:33.*)

Family ties (Numbers 16:1-3)

- Num. 16:1 also mentions Dathan and Abiram, two brothers whose father was named Eliab. Read Num. 26:5-9. Since Dathan and Abiram were from the tribe of Reuben, we know that they were descendants of Reuben, the oldest son of Jacob. From the information you find in Num. 26, construct a miniature family tree, in the space provided on the next page, which starts with Reuben and ends with Dathan and Abiram. (*Tip: use the family tree of the sons of Korah on page 4 as an example.*)

5. Compare the family tree in question 4 with that of the sons of Korah on page 4. Remember that Reuben and Levi were both sons of Jacob. How were Korah, Dathan, Abiram, Moses and Aaron all related to Jacob?

Here was an entire generation, thousands of cousins, all of them only several generations removed from their patriarch Jacob. It was the result of the miraculous fertility of the Israelites described in Exo. 1:7; "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them."

6. Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On bring with them 250 other well-known leaders of the people to confront Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:2). The complaint that they have is found in Num. 16:3. Read it for yourself and then write out what you think they really meant in your own words. Take into account your answer to question 5 and consult one or two other Bible translations.

Moses responds (Numbers 16:4-11)

7. Moses' first reaction to the complaints of the rebels is to "fall upon his face" (Num. 16:4). This meant that he dropped to the ground and stretched out his arms in a prostrate position. This gesture of complete obedience and perhaps supplication would not have been directed at Korah and company, but at God. There are numerous cases where Moses, Aaron and others do this same thing. Look at the following similar passages where Moses is recorded as doing this: Num. 14:5; 16:22; 16:45. Examine the context in each case. Why do you think Moses does this immediately after hearing the complaints of the rebels?
8. What does this initial reaction tell you about the motivations of Moses?
9. Note from Num. 16:3 that the complaint of the rebels is directed specifically at Moses and Aaron. Now look closely at Num. 16:10. Moses ascertains their true motivations. What was it they wanted?

The final point that Moses makes in his initial response is a powerful one. In Num. 16:11 he tells them that while they may have thought that they were gathering together to oppose Aaron, they were in actual fact joining forces to rebel against God. After all, it was God who had appointed Aaron and his sons as a "perpetual" priesthood in Exodus 29.

16. Korah, Dathan, Abiram, On and everyone that followed them felt that the roles and responsibilities that had been assigned in Israel were unfair. They felt that they had been unjustly overlooked. Collectively, their single greatest flaw can be summed up in one word. What is the word? (*Hint: the answer is mentioned multiple times in Proverbs 16.*)
17. Unlike the Israelites in the wilderness, we don't at the present time have leaders in our community that have been appointed by God. Explain how we can, nevertheless, make very similar mistakes to the ones that were made by Korah and his associates.

Dathan and Abiram's complaint (Numbers 16:12-15)

Moses' next move is to summon Dathan and Abiram to meet with him (Num. 16:12). It is interesting to note that this might indicate that Dathan and Abiram were not present and therefore not speaking with him in the previous verses. If this is the case, then Num. 16:3 records only the complaint of Korah while Num. 16:13-14 then records separately the complaints of Dathan and Abiram; their reasons for defecting being slightly different from those of Korah. Num. 16:1-2, however, would seem to indicate that the entire group of rebels is confronting Moses and Aaron in Num. 16:3. Either interpretation could be true, we do not know for sure. While it does not change the overall message of the story, these sorts of biblical mysteries are interesting to ponder. Do you see any further evidence supporting one interpretation over the other? Which do you think is true?

18. Dathan and Abiram demonstrate their immaturity in refusing to meet with Moses, acting like petulant children. Instead of coming to speak with Moses, they send him back a message. Their message has a structure to it, which is laid out in the chart below. **The letters 'a.' through 'd.' correspond to the questions that follow.**

	Num. 16:12-13 (ESV)	Num. 16:14 (ESV)
a.	"We will not come up."	
b.	"Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey,"	"Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey,"
c.	"to kill us in the wilderness"	"nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards."
d.	"that you must also make yourself a prince over us?"	"Will you put out the eyes of these men?"
a.		"We will not come up."

- a. Dathan and Abiram begin and end by saying "we will not come up". It frames their response. By refusing to communicate directly with Moses they were eliminating any possibility of reconciliation. Read Matt. 5:22-26. What should they have done and what does this teach us about how we should conduct ourselves in similar circumstances?
- b. Read Num. 14:1-9 and Exo. 3:7-8. When the Israelites expressed their desire to return to Egypt on a prior occasion, they were reminded that God had promised to lead them to a new and better home, a "land of milk and honey". Explain how Dathan and Abiram have completely reversed this message in their response. Elaborate further about how this parallels negative feelings we might also wrestle with on our journey to the Kingdom.
- c. Dathan and Abiram claim that through his actions Moses has essentially killed them; but even worse than that, they say, is that he has not provided them with an inheritance. They accuse him of having killed them without providing any future hope for themselves or their children. Is this true, false, or a mixture of both? Explain.
- d. The final and most direct verbal attack on Moses can be summarized thus: "do not think that you can deceive us, we know that you are only trying to exploit us to gain power". This sounds harsh, but have you ever attributed similar motives to individuals in your life? What does this teach us about assuming the worst when it comes to someone else's motives?

19. There was a powerful human vice that was spurring them on to make these bitter and resentful accusations against Moses and it is mentioned in direct relation to this story in Psalm 106. What was it?
20. Moses was "very angry" (Num. 16:15). We can see that he was offended by the personal assaults on his character because he tells God that he has never taken anything from any of them and has never hurt any of them. It is likely, however, that these were not the only reasons for his anger. Why else do you think he might have been angry? Do you think he was right to be angry for either of these reasons?

The great contest (Numbers 16:16-19)

21. It would seem that the rebels wanted a contest, and so that is what Moses gave them. In Num. 16:16 Moses tells them to gather "before the LORD" on the next day. Each man was to bring his "censer" with him. What was a censer? Draw a picture of a censer.
22. It would seem that they were content with the contest that Moses proposed since they followed his instructions without complaint. What does this tell you about the accuracy of Moses' assumption in Num. 16:10?

Picture the scene: 250 leaders of the people, who felt that they should have the same priestly privileges and responsibilities as Aaron, put fire in censers and stood in front of the tabernacle (pictured at the beginning of this section). All of these men stood together and faced down two men, Moses and Aaron, the latter holding out his own burning censer. An audience comprised of no less than the entire nation of Israel surrounded them, each likely standing and watching from their own tent (recall the layout of the camp from question 1). Not far away stood Dathan and Abiram, in the camp of Reuben, with their families (Num. 16:27). Though he would shortly join Dathan and Abiram, at the moment one man stood at the head of the 250 – Korah.

23. We can imagine the entire nation waiting in anticipation, nervous but restrained. They would not be disappointed, for "the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation". Research the phrase "the glory of the LORD". What do you think this looked like?

24. Read Lev. 9:23-10:2. Having lived through the events recorded there, do you think that Moses and Aaron were afraid now as the LORD once again appeared to them? What about Korah?
25. Read about the faith of Moses that is discussed in Hebrews 11. Further to your answer to question 24, do you think that someone can still be faithful if they are also afraid?

God announces judgment (Numbers 16:20-24)

26. God tells Moses and Aaron to get away from the "congregation" (KJV) so that he can "consume them in a moment" (Num. 16:21). Who was the congregation in this case? (*Hint: consider where Moses and Aaron were standing, from verses 18 & 19, and also who is eventually "consumed" in verse 35.*)
27. In Num. 16:22, Moses and Aaron plead with God not to punish this congregation. They address Him as "the God of the spirits of all flesh". One of the better Hebrew lexicons (HALOT) defines the word for "spirit", as it is used specifically in this verse, as follows: *the total breath which lives in individual members of the creation formed of flesh, meaning the breath of life in all flesh*. What do you think their objective was in addressing God by this particular title?
28. The question that they posed to God is an interesting one. Was it right, they asked, that He should punish the whole congregation because of the sins of one man? What does this tell you about whom Moses and Aaron thought should be held responsible for this rebellion? Do you agree with them?
29. If one man was thought to be at the heart of this great rebellion and would be the primary catalyst in the deaths of thousands (as we will see), then we can well imagine how the rest of the camp along with future generations of Israelites would later feel about that man. How do you think this might have impacted the sons of Korah, not only immediately but also throughout their entire history?

30. Consider the implications of what Moses and Aaron said about this man. He would be responsible for causing thousands in the camp to sin. Read John 11:50 and familiarize yourself with the argument made there by Caiaphas. Explain how this man is an antitype of the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Note: an antitype is an opposite or contrasting type.*)
31. The King James Version (KJV) uses the word "tabernacle" in Num. 16:24, but a better translation would be "dwelling" (ESV) or "homes" (NET). Describe what you think this scene looked like and what Moses' instructions from God in this verse meant. Where was Moses currently standing, where were Korah and the 250 leaders of the people, and where were the homes of Korah, Dathan and Abiram? (*Tip: refer to the "Picture the scene" narrative box on page 16 and the diagram of the camp from question 1.*)

Moses addresses the camp (Numbers 16:25-30)

32. Moses leaves his current position and goes to where Dathan and Abiram are standing (Num. 16:25). Why did he have to do this? (*Hint: the answer is in an earlier verse.*)
33. The "elders of Israel" come with Moses as he does this. Look up the word for "elders" in Num. 16:25 and the word for "princes" in Num. 16:2. Do you think these elders were the 250 princes that currently stood with Korah, or do you think they were a different group? If a different group, then who do you think they were?
34. Carefully read and consider Moses' words in Num. 16:26:
- Who do you think Moses was speaking to?
 - Who do you think Moses was *not* speaking to?

- c. Why might this be significant?
35. The KJV renders the first part of this message as "Depart, I pray you"; the ESV says, "Depart, please". What does this tell you about the tone that Moses was taking with the people? What does it tell you about how he felt?
36. Try to imagine yourself in the shoes of someone standing in the congregation of Israel at that time:
- From your reading of verses 20 and 23, would you have heard anything God had said?
 - What would you have seen, however? (*Hint: see verse 19.*)
 - What would you, personally, be thinking when Moses spoke the words recorded in verse 26?
 - Do you think you would have listened to him?
37. The people put some distance between themselves and the homes of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16:27). Read Num. 26:11. Remarkably, who also listened to Moses?

Picture the scene: Moses makes his way to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, somewhere in the camp of Reuben. He has now waded into the midst of the great congregation of Israel and pleads with them all to clear away from these rebels for their own safety. As they do so, Dathan and Abiram emerge from their tents, gathering their families to them to stand in defiance of Moses (Num. 16:27). Korah has followed Moses to see what will happen and he walks over to stand with Dathan, Abiram and their families. (We assume this to be the case since we learn from Num. 26:10 that Korah fell into the pit rather than being consumed by fire with the 250 leaders of the people.) He has chosen his side. His sons have chosen theirs.

38. Recall the initial complaint of the rebels against Moses and Aaron in Num. 16:3 - "You take too much upon yourselves." Now read Num. 4:10, the record of Moses' response when God first told him to be a leader to His people. Also read Num. 12:1-3. What insight do these passages give you into the last phrase of Num. 16:28 - "I have not done [these works] of my own will" (NET)?
39. It may be tempting to be critical of the children of Israel as they constantly complained and sometimes questioned the authority of Moses and Aaron. Consider their situation. Their life had not been easy in Egypt, but it had been the only life they had ever known. A man that most of them didn't know had compelled them to leave that life behind and flee into the harsh, foreboding wilderness. Now he constantly told them what to do and wouldn't let them leave; at least that's how it seemed. If it were you, would you have wanted proof that he was doing the right thing? Would you have complained?
40. It is clear from Num. 16:29-30 that Moses wanted the people to understand the significance of what was about to occur. It would be proof that God was speaking through him. Think about everything that had happened to these people up until this point. Many of them were still not convinced. Do you think that anything less than a catastrophe would have convinced them that this was true? Would it have taken a catastrophe to convince you?
41. The word for "quick" in the KJV (Num. 16:30) should be rendered in modern English as "alive". Those who refused to refrain from sin would literally fall into their own graves while they were still alive. What do you think this gruesome spectacle represents symbolically?
42. Remember Heman from the sons of Korah genealogy on page 4? Refer to the psalm that he wrote (see question 13 on page 6).
- Read the psalm again and pay special attention to verse 4. Even though Heman lived hundreds of years after Korah, how does it appear that he felt about himself in relation to the events of Numbers 16?
 - In light of Heman's psalm, how do you think the tragic death of Korah influenced future generations of the Korahite family?

Have you ever experienced tragic events in your life and wondered why God would allow them to happen? If so, consider the Korahites. The sons of Korah watched their father fall alive into a pit, watched 250 men burn to death and 14,700 people die of a plague because of his actions. They probably never thought that anything good could ever happen as a result of those events. One thousand years later they still remembered. Consider how many sons of Korah, throughout hundreds of years, may have been saved as a result, and how many of those men and women turned to righteousness because of their own faith.

"Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. Even all the hairs on your head are numbered. So do not be afraid; you are more valuable than many sparrows"(Matt. 10:29-31).

Down into the pit (Numbers 16:31-34)

43. God did not allow for any misunderstanding. As soon as Moses finished speaking the earth split apart under the feet of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Fill out the chart below and note how the record describes all of the events that Moses predicted in the exact order in which he predicted them:

Num. 16:30 (NET)	Num. 16:31-33
"But if the LORD does something entirely new, and the earth opens its mouth"	
"and swallows them up"	
"along with all that they have"	
"and they go down alive to the grave"	

44. Moses was very specific in his prediction of what was going to happen. Find the verses in Deut. 18 that talk about true and false prophets and explain why this was important.

45. What is the significance of the fact that the record includes the seemingly unnecessary detail that all of their goods fell into the earth along with them (Num. 16:32)?

46. To add to the horror of this moment, what do we find actually caused the rest of the congregation to flee from the site where the earth split open (Num. 16:34)?

Final Thoughts

47. The fate of the 250 leaders of the people is treated almost as an afterthought in Num. 16:35. God commands that their censers be gathered and forged to create a covering for the altar - a visual reminder of the folly of Korah. God gives the children of Israel many visual reminders in the Old Testament. For each passage listed below, write beside it the specific visual reminder given by God and what it was to remind the people about:

Num. 15:38-41:

Num. 17:10:

Exo. 13:6-10:

Josh. 4:5-7:

48. Read through Numbers 16 and write out a list of all of the people and groups of people who died in this chapter.

49. Return to Num. 3:29-31. Who was in charge of the altars?

50. What effect do you think this visual reminder, the brass altar covering, would have had not only on the immediate sons of Korah (Assir, Elkanah and Ebiasaph) but on successive generations as well?

Write down some of the questions you have about the story of the rebellion in Numbers 16:

PSALMS OF THE SONS OF KORAH

The book of Psalms sits in the middle of our Bibles, and for many generations it has been a tremendous source of comfort and inspiration to believers. Many of us likely have favorite verses in the Psalms, and could probably quote them from memory.

Although Psalms continues to be one of the most beloved books in the Bible, it can also prove difficult to study and understand at times. Brother Mark Vincent makes this point in the introduction to his book, *Exploring the Psalms*, and illustrates what he means by asking how we should read the psalms: as poetry; as hymns or songs; as prophecy; as an historical account; literally or figuratively. The answer is that the book as a whole contains psalms that can be read and interpreted accurately from any one of these perspectives. Indeed, some individual psalms can only be fully understood when examined through the lens of all of these perspectives.

When we come to the psalms that bear the name of the sons of Korah, what we have is a relatively small number of psalms that were all written by those with the same family name. Eleven psalms are attributed to the sons of Korah in the King James Version (KJV). Such a manageable group of psalms with the same family background can allow us to dig deeper into what can sometimes seem like a daunting and elusive book.

While there are eleven psalms attributed to the sons of Korah in the KJV, what we find with these psalms is that it actually becomes somewhat difficult to narrow down which psalms were actually written by the sons of Korah. While the KJV attributes eleven psalms to this family, we'll find as we get into the study that although Psalm 43 doesn't have a title at all, it is almost certainly written by the sons of Korah. With this psalm added to the list, there are now twelve psalms of the sons of Korah. But, when you consider the placement of psalm titles, a concern arises over two of the psalms in this original list. J.W. Thirtle in his book *The Titles of the Psalms* suggests that the titles of Psalm 46 and Psalm 88 actually belong at the end of the preceding psalms rather than at the beginning of the psalms themselves. If you accept this theory then there are now only ten psalms definitively written by the sons of Korah – Psalms 42-45, 47-49, 84, 85 and 87.

As part of the study that you are now undertaking, we'll be considering six of these psalms – Psalms 42-44, 84, 85 and 87. These psalms span across what's known in the Hebrew text as Book 2 (Psalms 42-72) and Book 3 (Psalms 73-89) of the Psalter. In the first part of the workbook we'll be considering the psalms in Book 2, Psalms 42, 43 and 44. In part two of the workbook, we'll be considering the psalms of Book 3, Psalms 84, 85 and 87.

There are many different ways that you can look at the Psalms, so in the workbook we'll be varying the approach somewhat of how we look at them. In part 1, we'll start by looking at the background for each psalm, and when it seems that the author may have been writing. When we're not given these details explicitly, we're left to develop them through exposition. Something that's beautiful about all of the psalms is that they are what you might call timeless in nature. So, even if we're not told or we're not convinced of whom a particular author might be, the lessons that emerge from the psalms are still applicable. Where we can determine the background, the impact of the message becomes even stronger. In part 1 we'll work our way through the psalms and investigate the thoughts and the ideas that are expressed to us by this faithful family. In part 2, we'll look more at the structure of the psalms, and the ideas that emerge when we consider their poetical devices. Interspersed between each of the psalms, we'll consider a brief snapshot of some of the various individuals that were a part of the sons of Korah, or influenced them in some way. Doing so will help us to construct a better picture of the great character of this faithful family.

“A day in thy courts is better than a thousand”

The lessons of these psalms – the virtues extolled, the anguish expressed, the faith proclaimed – are a great source of inspiration and encouragement. When you understand this unique family, an even greater depth of meaning emerges from the words that they penned. As you consider their psalms against the backdrop of their long family history, these ancient poems will come alive for you. What were they thinking and feeling, throughout the ages, as they remained faithful during storms of apostasy or as almost certain destruction loomed? The answer is in their psalms.

PSALM 42 & 43

Psalm 42

TO THE CHIEF MUSICIAN, MASCHIL, OF THE SONS OF KORAH

- 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?
- 3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
- 4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me:
For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.
- 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted in me?
Hope thou in God:
For I shall yet praise him
For the help of his countenance.
- 6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me:
Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan,
And of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.
- 7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts:
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
- 8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night his song shall be with me,
And my prayer unto the God of my life.
- 9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;
While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?
- 11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God:
For I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Psalm 43

- 1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation:
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.
- 2 For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me;
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.
- 4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy:
Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

- 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope in God:
For I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Introduction

Psalms 42 starts a new section in the book of Psalms. It is the first psalm in what is known as Book 2 of the Psalter. The Hebrew text divided the psalms into 5 books:

- Book 1 (Psalms 1-41)
- Book 2 (Psalms 42-72)
- Book 3 (Psalms 73-89)
- Book 4 (Psalms 90-106)
- Book 5 (Psalms 107-150)

As the first psalm in Book 2, Psalm 42 introduces a new author and new themes. The new author is none other than the family known as the sons of Korah. The sons of Korah had exhibited a dedication to the things of God's truth and a conviction to uphold His principles in their life. This conviction had driven them to stand aside from their father when he rebelled against Moses and Aaron. This same conviction and desire to worship God in sincerity and truth is something that comes out in the words of their psalms as well, which we'll investigate as we proceed.

1. Most commentators have suggested that Psalms 42 and 43 should actually be considered together. Let's investigate some of the evidence to support that suggestion.
 - a. There is a refrain that's been repeated 3 times between Psalm 42 and 43. Find this refrain and list the verses that it's found in below.
 - b. There's an identical phrase that's repeated between Psalm 42 and 43 dealing with mourning. What is the repeated phrase and what verses is it found in?
 - c. There are similar thoughts and ideas between Psalm 42 and 43. Read through both of these psalms and summarize the common themes.
 - d. Many psalms have a superscription (intro), subscription (ending) or both. Does either of these exist between Psalm 42 and Psalm 43? What could this indicate when you consider that chapter/psalm divisions were not in the original text?

- e. Based on questions 1a) – 1d) above, do you think that Psalm 42 and 43 should be considered together? Explain your reasoning.

Background

We're not given any direct indications of when these Psalms may have been written. What we are told is that they were written "for the sons of Korah", or as most translations have it "of the sons of Korah". It was written by a family, or perhaps more specifically, an individual who identified himself as a part of the sons of Korah. We're left to try to determine from the evidence that's supplied in the psalms as to when they may have been written.

2. Read through Psalm 42 and 43 again. Then fill out the chart below to describe the events/characteristics that the sons of Korah make reference to in the verses listed in the left hand column. It has already been started for you.

Psalm 42, 43	Event or Characteristic
42:2 – "when shall I come and appear before God"	
42:3 – "they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?"	They are surrounded by mocking enemies
42:4 – "I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God"	
42:6 – "from the land of Jordan, And of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar"	They live in the north of the land, near Mt. Hermon
42:9-10 – "the oppression of the enemy... mine enemies reproach me"	
43:1 – "an ungodly nation"	
43:1 – "the deceitful and unjust man"	
43:3 – "bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles"	

3. The aspects in the chart above help to paint the picture of the events surrounding the sons of Korah when they were writing Psalm 42 & 43. Any potential background to the psalm should be able to satisfy all of the events or aspects that are written about in the psalm.
- a. Some commentators have suggested that these psalms speak of a Levite who was with David when he fled from Absalom. Did David take refuge among mocking enemies (v3,10) or abide near Mt. Hermon (v.6)? (*Hint: See 1 Sam. 22:2.*)

- b. Others suggest that the author is King Hezekiah when he was prevented from worshipping God because of his leprosy. Was Hezekiah ever exiled near Mt Hermon? Who is authorship given to in the title of the psalm?
4. Let's investigate to see if there's another time period that does seem to fit all of the aspects of the psalm.
 - a. In what time period of Israel's history were there Levites in the north of the land (near Mt. Hermon) that felt isolated and oppressed? (*Hint: See 1 Kings 12:26-31.*)
 - b. What city in the northern part of Israel is mentioned in 1 Kings 12:26-31? Locate this city on a Bible map and describe its proximity to Mt. Hermon.
 - c. What had happened to the Levites in this city in 1 Kings 12:31?
 - d. What does 2 Chron. 11:14-15 say had happened to the Levites at this time? What phrase from 2 Chron. 11:14 is repeated in Psalm 43:2?
 - e. Psalm 43:1 speaks of a 'deceitful and unjust man'. Who might this be referring to from the passages above in 1 Kings 12 and 2 Chron. 11?

What we have in Psalm 42-43 is a psalm written by the sons of Korah (Levites) who were up in the north in the days of Jeroboam. They felt isolated by the wickedness around them, and mourned for being cast off from their office. They greatly desired to appear before God amidst the presence of an ungodly man who instigated a mocking spirit against the God who they served.

5. Determining the circumstances and the time period around which the sons of Korah were writing can help us to better appreciate the thoughts and the feelings that they express in their psalms.
 - a. The sons of Korah were surrounded by people who were worshipping a golden calf. How often do we feel surrounded by wickedness on every side? Do you feel that you are/have been surrounded by ungodly people or practices? Describe your circumstances.

- b. The sons of Korah lament a mocking spirit that said 'Where is thy God?' There are many in the world today that don't believe in a God and that ridicule those who do. Have you experienced this, or know someone who has? Explain.

- c. Living up in the north of the land amidst idolatry would have isolated the sons of Korah from their brethren. How does being isolated from those who share the same beliefs make it difficult for someone to worship God?

A Repeated Refrain

- 6. There is a verse that's been repeated 3 times between Psalms 42 and 43. When you consider that these psalms were likely sung as a song, it helps to illustrate what the repetition was used for. We would call this repetition a refrain, or a chorus.
 - a. Using the verses of the refrain (from question 1a), show how these verses provide a natural breaking point in the psalms. Provide your breakdown of Psalms 42 and 43 below.

 - b. Not only does the refrain break up the psalms, it also serves to summarize the ideas that are expressed in both psalms. Describe the emotion of the sons of Korah in the first 2 questions of the refrain.

 - c. What is the answer that immediately follows the first 2 questions of the refrain? How might this be a solution to how they are feeling?

 - d. How does the author resolve to react to this answer in the last part of the refrain?

 - e. Should we come to the same answer and the same resolution that the sons of Korah did when we experience these same emotions? Describe how this should apply to us.

We'll see that the same feelings and resolutions that are evident in the refrain are expanded in more detail throughout the rest of Psalms 42 and 43. We'll investigate these thoughts as we proceed, as they can provide a very helpful example for us.

Thirsting for God (Psalm 42:1-4)

7. Psalm 42 starts off by using an analogy to describe the feelings of the sons of Korah.
 - a. In the KJV the animal mentioned is the hart, but many newer translations have a different word. Using another translation (NKJV, ESV, NASB etc.), what animal is this referring to?
 - b. What would make this animal pant after the water brooks? Describe how this analogy paints a vivid picture of the sons of Korah's longing for God.
 - c. What does water represent in scripture? (*Hint: See Eph. 5:26.*)
 - d. What should we be thirsting after in a spiritual sense? Do you exhibit this same type of attitude in your own life?
8. The sons of Korah describe God as 'the living God' in v2. How would this have been a contrast to the idols that Jeroboam had set up around them?
9. The sons of Korah use graphic poetic language to express their sorrow: "My tears have been my meat day and night".
 - a. Describe the implications of this statement, and how desperately they sought for fellowship with God.
 - b. How should we view our fellowship with one another? Compare with Heb 10:25.

10. How would the continual insults and mocking of 'Where is thy God?' have an impact on their attitude and position? What would they need to do to combat this?
11. In v.4 we come to the reason for their tears (v.3) and their depression (Refrain).
- How can remembering things in the past cause such grief? Have you ever been distraught over something that you remember from your past that you can no longer experience?
 - Look up the phrase 'went with them to the house of God' in another translation (ESV, NASB or RSV). What do these translations have for this phrase and how does this change the meaning?
 - What would be the duties of the sons of Korah when crowds of people came to the temple at these festivals?

The sons of Korah felt depressed and downtrodden when they remembered the joyful days of old when in their present circumstances they were oppressed and surrounded by wickedness. They knew that God was working in their life, but their natural reaction still struggled to deal with it. How often can this be the case for us as well?

When wondering why they feel cast down in the refrain of v.5, a resolution immediately comes to mind. Hope in God! This was what pushed them to overcome their trials and to put down the feelings of depression that plagued them. It was the resolve to press on and trust in God. It's the same attitude that we must have. When we go through trials and distressing times in our lives, let us keep our minds firmly fixed on the eternal hope that we have in our God.

The Struggle of Hope

All the way through Psalm 42-43 there is a struggle to maintain the vision of hope that's repeated in each of the refrains. As you go through these psalms you can see the mind of the sons of Korah vacillating back and forth. On the one hand they confidently hoped in God and trusted in Him, but at the same time the emotion and experience of suffering was overwhelming them.

12. Complete the chart below that outlines this struggle between suffering and joy. Fill in the phrase related to joy in the right hand column from the passage that's specified. Each of the aspects of joy follows after the corresponding statement of suffering in the left hand column. The chart has already been started for you.

Psalm	Suffering	Psalm	Joy
42:3-4	"tears... pour out my soul in me"	42:4	"voice of joy and praise"
42:5	"cast down... disquieted"	42:5	
42:6	"my soul is cast down within me"	42:6	
42:7	"All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me"	42:8	
42:9-10	"the oppression of the enemy... mine enemies reproach me"	N/A	N/A
42:11	"cast down... disquieted"	42:11	
43:2	"cast me off... oppression of the enemy"	43:3-4	
43:5	"cast down... disquieted"	43:5	

Oppression by the enemy (Psalm 42:6-10)

13. We have the location identified for us in v.6 where the sons of Korah (or at least one of the sons of Korah) lived. There are 3 terms used to identify this location. Look up the last 2 on a Bible map and describe what they are in reference to. (*Hint: the exact location of Mizar is not known. Look up the meaning of the word to help identify what it's referring to.*)

'land of Jordan' – There are 4 rivers that flow into the river Jordan near the base of Mt. Hermon. These are known as the sources of the river Jordan. A reference to a general region around the Jordan River.

'Hermonites' –

'hill Mizar' -

14. Look up the word 'waterspouts' from v.7 in several other translations. What do other translations have for this word and describe what is meant by 'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts'. (*Hint: Think of how the natural landscape surrounding them could be used to describe their problems.*)

15. What do waves and billows symbolize in Psa. 88:7? How does this help to explain the analogy in v.7 'all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me'?

16. Despite the overwhelming oppression that the sons of Korah were grappling with, they had not lost sight of their hope in God. Psa. 42:8 lists 3 different ways that they used to combat their depression. Describe how each of these items can be a source of comfort and strength in times of difficulty.

Trust in God's lovingkindness –

Song –

Prayer –

17. The sons of Korah speak of a song that they remembered in the night. We're not told what this song was, but remember that this family had been placed over the service of song in the nation (1 Chron. 6:31-32). They would have known Israel's songs well.

- a. In Exodus 15 we have the song of Moses. Do you see any parallels in this chapter that might explain 'the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime' from Psa. 42:8?
- b. There was another song that Moses had taught the people in Deut. 32. Why did God want Moses to teach this song to the children of Israel in Deut. 31:19-22?
- c. What phrase from Deut. 32:47 is repeated in the end of Psa. 42:8? Do you think the sons of Korah followed the command of Moses in Deut. 32:44-47?

18. The sons of Korah express their feelings to God in prayer in Psa. 42:9. How should we express ourselves to God in prayer in times of difficulty? Compare with James 5:13 and Phil. 4:6-7.

19. Had God forgotten the sons of Korah as they say in Psa. 42:9? How does 1 Pet. 3:12-16 explain what they were going through?

20. The sons of Korah lament over the daily taunts of their enemies in Psa. 42:10. Use Prov. 12:18 and Psa. 52:2 to describe the damage that words can cause.

The sons of Korah had remembered God in the midst of their trials. They knew that God would ultimately deliver them and they resolved to continually pray to Him and to remember His songs. But still, the afflictions they were experiencing threatened to swallow them up. The daily mocking of a deceitful enemy was wearing them down. It still felt like God had forgotten them.

Once more though, the conflict in their mind was halted when they came to the resolution to hope in God in the refrain of v.11! Through God their doubts and their fears could be cast down. Let us come to the same faithful resolve in our own lives when our trials seem to be overwhelming us.

Deliverance and Guidance (Psalm 43:1-4)

The desperate and downcast attitude of Psalm 42 starts to become more resolute as we move into Psalm 43. The sons of Korah seem to display an increasing trust in God as we move through the 2 Psalms, realizing that God was in control of events that they could not change.

21. The sons of Korah ask for God to judge them and their cause in Psa. 43:1. They knew that they had acted in the integrity of their heart, and they ask God to examine them accordingly.
- a. How do the words of David in Psalm 26 shed light on this request? What is it that David asks of God in Psalm 26?
 - b. This is the same attitude that we should have, but it's not something that comes naturally. What might prevent us from asking for this type of examination from God?
22. There is a similar request for deliverance in Psalm 71.
- a. Identify the similarities between Psa. 71:4-6 and Psa. 43:1.
 - b. What aspect in Psa. 71:14-16 does the Psalmist give that provides him the resolve to stand firm against the wicked? (*Hint: This idea is repeated 3 times in Psa. 42-43.*)

23. After asking for deliverance in v.1, the sons of Korah call God 'the God of my strength' in Psa. 43:2. What is it about trusting in God's strength that can affect deliverance? Use Psa. 37:39-40 in your answer.
24. The sons of Korah ask for God to send out His light and truth in v.3.
- God leading the people by light was something that the sons of Korah had experienced before. When had this happened in their past? (*Hint: See Exod. 13:21.*)
 - Explain how both light and truth are related from John 3:19-21.
 - What can we do to follow after God's light and God's truth? Psa. 25:4-5 and Josh 1:8 provide some direction for this.
 - This request for God's light and truth also seems to be seeking a sign that might lead them to a specific place. What is the holy hill referring to? (*Hint: Psa. 2:6.*)
 - There is a remarkable event in the life of Jeroboam where just such a sign was provided. Read through 1 Kings 13:1-5 and describe what happened.
 - Do you think the prayer of the sons of Korah in Psa. 43 had been answered?
25. In Psa. 43:4, the sons of Korah said that they would go to the altar of God if He would show them a sign. Based on the sign that we saw in the life of Jeroboam, do you think they followed through with this? See 2 Chron. 11:16.
26. There is a promise to praise God and sacrifice to Him in response to His action in their life in Psalm 43:4.
- What necessary response do the sons of Korah portray, that's outlined in Phil. 4:6?

- b. The sons of Korah mention an instrument that they were well accustomed to in v.4. What man from the genealogy of the sons of Korah do you recognize in 1 Chron. 25:1-6, and what instrument did his family play that's repeated in Psalm 43?
- c. List some ways in which you can use your own talents in service to God.

After much deliberation and vacillating over how to respond to the trials in their life, the sons of Korah finally realize that their deliverance and guidance was bound up in their God. They resolve to leave their troubles in His hands, and to put their focus on the great hope that they have in their God!

This is the same resolve we must come to in our own lives. Hope in God can help us to overcome the many difficulties and trials that come upon us in this lifetime.

Hope in God

After seeing the repeated emphasis that the sons of Korah place on hope, it's worth exploring why it was such an encouragement to them.

27. What is it that hope can do for us in Rom. 8:24?
28. What aspect does Paul emphasize about hope in Rom. 8:24-25, and why is it significant?
29. There are many different aspects that make up the hope that's referred to throughout the scriptures. Review the following passages and summarize some of the key aspects that they make reference to: Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 2:19; Tit. 1:2; Tit. 3:7; Heb. 3:6.
30. How do we obtain this hope in Rom. 5:1-2?

31. Paul outlines a process that leads to hope in Rom. 5:3-5. Describe how each of the aspects listed below adds to the development of character in a believer.

Tribulation -

Patience –

Experience –

Hope -

32. Obtaining this hope requires action on our part. What are we required to do from Heb. 6:17-18?

33. Describe how hope can be a stabilizing influence from the analogy that's described in Heb. 6:19.

34. The Apostle Peter expands on many of the ideas that we've looked at about hope. Read through 1 Peter 1 and summarize the aspects about hope that are found in the verses listed below.

1 Peter 1:3 –

1 Peter 1:4 –

1 Peter 1:5 –

1 Peter 1:6 –

1 Peter 1:7 –

1 Peter 1:8-9 –

1 Peter 1:13 –

1 Peter 1:21 –

35. What is the necessary step that's required to make hope possible in Eph. 2:12-13?

Parallels with Christ

One of the amazing themes throughout the Bible is how the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed in hidden layers throughout the record. This is especially true in the book of Psalms, and Psalms 42-43 are no exception. We'll consider just a few parallels where Christ is revealed to illustrate how the psalms can be viewed in this light.

36. We considered the struggle of hope that the sons of Korah endured in question 12. This same struggle is something that Christ endured as he faced his own impending death and cruel trials. What phrase does Christ utter in Gethsemane in Matt 26:36-38 that has its parallel in the refrain of Psalm 42-43?

37. How many prayers does Christ give in Matt. 26:39-44? How many refrains are there in Psalm 42-43 that echo Christ's prayers?

38. What was it that helped Christ to endure the cross from Heb. 12:2? Is this the same resolve from the refrain of Psalm 42-43?

39. Complete the chart below that highlights aspects from the life of Christ that parallel words expressed by the sons of Korah in Psalm 42-43. Fill in the phrase related to Christ in the right hand column from the passage that's specified.

Psalm	Sons of Korah	References	Life of Christ
42:3	"My tears have been my meat day and night"	Psa. 22:2	"I cry in the daytime... and in the night season"
42:3,10	"Where is thy God?"	Psa. 22:7-8 Matt 27:43	
42:4	"I went with them to the house of God"	Luke 2:46	
42:4	"with a multitude that kept holyday"	Luke 2:42	
42:5,11; 43:5	"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"	Matt. 26:38	
42:6	"my soul is cast down"	John 12:27	
42:9	"Why hast thou forgotten me?"	Psa. 22:1	
42:10	"As with a sword in my bones"	Psa. 22:16-17 John 19:34	

43:3	"O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me"	John 8:12	
43:3	"bring me unto thy holy hill"	Psa. 2:6	
43:4	"Then will I go unto the altar of God"	Heb. 13:10	

Final Thoughts

40. After seeing the incredible motivation that hope was able to provide for the sons of Korah, write down what your hope is. Explain what your vision of the kingdom looks like.

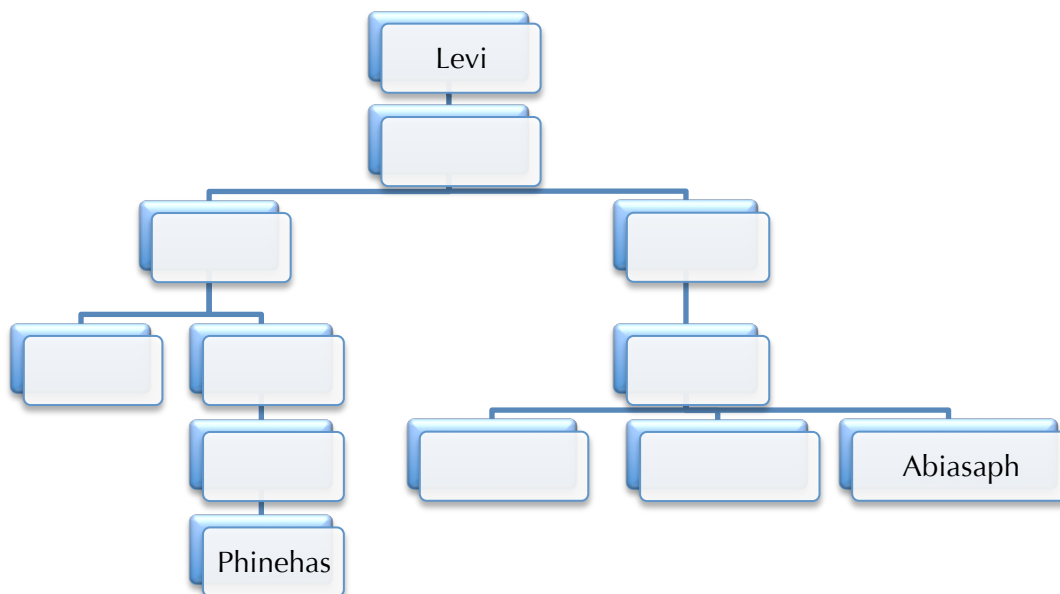
PHINEHAS

After having seen the great desire and longing to serve God that the sons of Korah express in Psalm 42-43, we'll take a step back again and look at one of the influences in their life that had a profound affect on them. There was one man in particular that it seems had inspired the sons of Korah to serve God and to uphold His truth - none other than the man Phinehas.

Ruler over them

The relationship of Phinehas to the sons of Korah really stems from just one passage. But what we're told in that passage opens up a wealth of information that helps us to better understand the sons of Korah.

1. What does 1 Chron. 9:19-20 say was the relationship between Phinehas, the Korahites and the various roles of service?
2. What is the Hebrew word and meaning for 'ruler' in 1 Chron. 9:20? What does this tell us about Phinehas' rulership?
3. It's helpful to visualize where Phinehas fits into the family tree in relation to the original sons of Korah. This will help us to understand how exactly he was ruler over them. Complete the family tree below using Exod. 6:16-25.



4. Based on the family tree above, how is Phinehas related to the sons of Korah? Do you think Phinehas would have held influence over Korah's sons at the time of Korah's rebellion?

5. A particular man was appointed chief over the Levites in Num. 3:30-32. Who was it and what was his responsibility to the tabernacle service itself?
6. What responsibility in Num. 3:31 is repeated in 1 Chron. 9:19. Were the sons of Korah fulfilling the charge that had been given to their family?
7. The responsibility over the tabernacle service was given to a particular office in Num. 4:16. What was this office, and what phrase in Num. 4:16 (that's repeated in Num. 3:32) helps to identify it?
8. What similar phrase in 1 Chron. 9:20 identifies this same office in relation to Phinehas?
9. If rulership over the sons of Korah was given to a particular office, there would have been many who fulfilled this role by the time of David. Why do you think Phinehas is singled out as being ruler over them?

The Zeal of Phinehas

10. One of the most famous exploits of Phinehas is found in Num. 25. Read through Num. 25 and briefly summarize the actions of Phinehas in this chapter.
11. What would Phinehas' role and responsibility have been at the time of Num. 25? (*Hint: Review the events of Num. 20:23-29 in light of questions 5-7.*)
12. In case anyone thought Phinehas' actions were too ruthless, God immediately gives His approval of them in Num. 25:10-11. What was it that caused Phinehas to act as he did? What does YLT have for v.11 that relates the motivation to God?
13. What was promised to Phinehas because of his actions in Num. 25:12-13 and Psa. 106:30-31?

14. What kind of an example would Phinehas have been to the sons of Korah in light of question 11?
15. How does Phinehas' example of standing up for the truth relate to the sons of Korah's own experience in Num. 16?
16. Phinehas had acted as a faithful doorkeeper to keep out wickedness from the tabernacle (see also Num. 25:6). How does this example parallel with one of the key responsibilities of the sons of Korah as they describe it in Psa. 84:10?
17. The same zeal that the sons of Korah saw in Phinehas, they would take up in their own family through their tireless devotion and service to their God. Look up a dictionary definition for the word 'zeal'.
18. Describe what 2 Cor. 9:2 says about how zeal can affect others. Do you think this was true between Phinehas and the sons of Korah?
19. Zeal is something we should be striving to develop in our own life. What type of zeal should we be developing? Compare with Titus 2:14.
20. Zeal needs to be directed in the right manner, as misguided zeal can create harmful results. What do Rom. 10:2 and Prov. 19:2 (look up in the NET translation) say is required in order to have a Godly zeal?
21. Think of a time when someone else's zeal has inspired you in the things of God's word. Describe the situation and the effect that this had on you.

PSALM 44**Psalm 44**

TO THE CHIEF MUSICIAN OF THE SONS OF KORAH, MASCHIL

- 1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us,
What work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.
- 2 How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them;
How thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.
- 3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword,
Neither did their own arm save them:
But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance,
Because thou hadst a favour unto them.
- 4 Thou art my King, O God:
Command deliverances for Jacob.
- 5 Through thee will we push down our enemies:
Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.
- 6 For I will not trust in my bow,
Neither shall my sword save me.
- 7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies,
And hast put them to shame that hated us.
- 8 In God we boast all the day long,
And praise thy name for ever. *Selah*.
- 9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame;
And goest not forth with our armies.
- 10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy:
And they which hate us spoil for themselves.
- 11 Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat;
And hast scattered us among the heathen.
- 12 Thou sellest thy people for nought,
And dost not increase thy wealth by their price.
- 13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.
- 14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen,
A shaking of the head among the people.
- 15 My confusion is continually before me,
And the shame of my face hath covered me,
- 16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth;
By reason of the enemy and avenger.
- 17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee,
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.
- 18 Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from thy way;
- 19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons,
And covered us with the shadow of death.
- 20 If we have forgotten the name of our God,
Or stretched out our hands to a strange god;

"A day in thy courts is better than a thousand"

- 21 Shall not God search this out?
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
- 22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
- 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?
Arise, cast us not off for ever.
- 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
- 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
- 26 Arise for our help,
And redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

Background

The title of Psalm 44 identifies the author of the psalm for us. But instead of naming an individual, it once again lists a family name – the *sons of Korah*. As we've seen already, the sons of Korah were a faithful Levitical family that was present for generations down through Israel's history.

We're not told whom the individual was who wrote the psalm, or the time period in which he was writing. However, what we are given is a few different clues in the psalm itself that indicate what was happening at the time the psalm was written.

1. Read through Psalm 44. Then fill out the chart below to describe the events/characteristics that the Psalmist makes reference to in the verses that are listed. It has already been started for you.

Psalm 44	Event or Characteristic
v. 5 – "push down our enemies"	
v. 7 – "thou hast saved us from our enemies"	The nation had been victorious in battle
v. 9 – "goest not forth with our armies"	The nation had an army in the field
v. 10 – "makest us to turn back from the enemy"	
v. 11 – "hast scattered us among the heathen"	
v. 17 – "neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant"	
v. 18 – "neither have our steps declined from thy way"	

2. Some commentators have suggested that this psalm was written in the days of Hezekiah, when the Assyrians had invaded the land and destroyed large areas in Judah. Consider the following aspects from the chart above to see if the evidence supports that suggestion.

- a. Was Hezekiah's army victorious in battle and saved from their enemies? Compare Psalm 44:5-7 with 2 Kings 18:9-13.
- b. Did Hezekiah have an army in the field? Compare Psalm 44:9 with 2 Chron. 32:1-8.
- c. Psalm 44:17-18 speaks of the innocence of the nation in their calamity. Was this the case in Hezekiah's day? Compare with 2 Kings 18:11-12.
- d. Given your answers to the questions above, does it seem likely that this psalm was written during the days of Hezekiah? Explain your reasoning.

3. A number of interesting direct connections exist between Psalm 44 and Psalm 60. Read through Psalm 60 and look for similarities between Psalm 44 and Psalm 60. Complete the chart below by filling in the right hand column with the verse and phrase from Psalm 60 that matches the corresponding verse and phrase in the left hand column from Psalm 44.

Psalm 44	Psalm 60
v.5 "Through thee will we push down our enemies... tread them under"	
v.9 "thou hast cast off... and goest not forth with our armies"	
v.11 "hast scattered us among the heathen"	v1 "thou hast scattered us"
v.23 "cast us not off for ever"	

4. Having looked at the connections between Psalm 44 and Psalm 60, try to find a similar theme between the two psalms. Using evidence from the chart in question 3, summarize what you think the common theme is between them.
5. The title of Psalm 60 gives a very specific occasion in history that helps to date the psalm. Who does Psalm 60 indicate as its author? At what point in his life does it refer to?

6. As we're told precisely who the author of Psalm 60 is, it seems we've now uncovered another possibility as to whom the author of Psalm 44 might be. In question 3 we looked at the direct connections between Psalm 44 and Psalm 60, and in question 4 we examined the common themes between the two psalms. Now let's have a look at the time period that Psalm 60 pinpoints for us to see if this matches up with Psalm 44.
 - a. 2 Sam. 8 is where we have David in one of his military campaigns. It's also the time period mentioned in the title of Psalm 60. What two groups does David fight against in 2 Sam. 8:3-6?
 - b. The title of Psalm 60 mentions two groups that David strove against: 'Aram-naharaim' and 'Aram-zobah'. Look up these two groups in a Bible Dictionary to see whom they refer to.
 - c. In 2 Sam. 8:13, it mentions that David smote of the Syrians in the valley of salt 18,000 men. Does this reconcile with the title of Psalm 60 where it says that it was Edom who was smitten in the valley of salt? (*Hint: Lookup 2 Sam 8:13 in the RSV or the ESV.*)
 - d. The companion record to 2 Sam. 8 is found in 1 Chron. 18. Who is the victory attributed to in 1 Chron. 18:12? Does this reconcile with the title of Psalm 60?
 - e. In 1 Chron. 18:13 garrisons are put in Edom. Why would it be necessary to put garrisons in Edom at this particular time?

Here we have David fighting against Hadadezer king of Zobah up in the north. At the same time however, the Syrians of Damascus come to help Hadadezer, and it appears David is caught between two armies. Taking advantage of David's absence up in the north, the Edomites lead a confederacy into the land of Israel itself, as the title of Psalm 60 suggests. Hearing the news of the invasion while up in the north, David offers a prayer to God. He then sends Joab and Abishai southwards against the Edomites who had invaded Israel. With God's help, they gain a miraculous victory as 18,000 of the Edomites are slain in the valley of salt!

7. Having seen the background to Psalm 60 in one of David's military campaigns, let's look back now to Psalm 44 to see if it fits with this psalm as well.

- a. Go back to the chart in question 1. Which events or characteristics that you listed from Psalm 44 can you see application of in David's military campaign of 2 Sam. 8?

- b. Are there any events or characteristics from the chart in question 1 that don't fit with the time period in David's days?

- c. Based on your answers to a) and b) above, do you think a background in the time of David is likely for Psalm 44?

So how does all of this background relate to Psalm 44 and Psalm 60? What we have in Psalm 60 is David's prayer after hearing the news of the invasion of the Edomites. He is bewildered at the way in which God had allowed this to take place. Psalm 44 is a prayer by a group of Levites, sons of Korah, who were still in the land of Israel as the enemy was devastating the land while David was absent up in the north. They were left to guard the tabernacle and encourage the people to trust in God amidst their own confusion and shame.

God's deliverance in times of old (Psalm 44:1-3)

8. Psalm 44 starts off by recounting what the sons of Korah had heard about what God had done in times of old. Who was it that the sons of Korah had heard these stories from? What does this tell us about how knowledge was passed on to the next generation?

9. Do you think this was a contributing factor to how this family remained faithful for so many generations? Explain your reasoning.

10. Write down some practical ways in which we can impart the truth of God's word to the next generation. Consider the principles found in Deut. 6:7 and Psa. 78:1-8.

11. Go through Psalm 44 and identify all of the pronouns referring to God (thou, thy, thine, thee, he) as well as the titles of God (God, Lord). How many times is God referenced in this Psalm? List them below. (*Tip: you may want to colour these in with a coloured pencil in your Bible.*)

12. What occasion(s) in the past do the sons of Korah refer to in vs. 2-3? (*Hint: Compare Josh. 3:10; Josh. 24:11-13.*)

13. Who do the sons of Korah identify as the one responsible for everything that they list in vs. 2-3? What does this tell us about how we should view events happening around us? Compare Dan. 4:17.

Trust in God (Psalm 44:4-8)

In verses 1-3, the sons of Korah were reflecting on God's deliverances in the past. They use phrases in the past tense to describe the situation (have heard, didst, hadst). But now as we come to v. 4, they shift their attention to the present. Verse 4 starts off 'thou art' or 'you are'; they're now speaking in the present tense. As we look at the next section of verses, consider how the sons of Korah relay their present circumstances before their God.

14. In v. 4, the sons of Korah say, "Thou art my King, O God". Where was the nation's king at the time? Consider the background to the psalm from question 6.

15. Then they go on to say "command deliverances for Jacob". This request is coming from one of the sons of Korah. Who would normally issue such a request on behalf of the nation? Were there any natural defenses to turn to at this particular time?

16. In what circumstances can we ask our King to deliver us? Compare 2 Cor. 1:8-10.

17. It's interesting that the sons of Korah would use the name of Jacob in v.4. Consider the significance of this choice of words.
 - a. What was Jacob's name changed to? What was Esau also known as? (*Hint: Compare Gen. 32:28 and Gen. 36:1.*)

- b. What 2 groups were involved in the conflict that the sons of Korah refer to in Psalm 44?

The situation that the sons of Korah found themselves in was just like that of Jacob when he met his brother Esau in Gen. 32!

- c. Where had Jacob been while he was dwelling with Laban? Compare Gen. 31:18.
- d. What region is this place located in? Use a Bible map for assistance.
- e. Could this place be in the same region as David had just been while fighting up in the north? Refer to question 6 b).
- f. Jacob feared greatly at the prospect of meeting his brother Esau in Gen. 32. How does Jacob handle this situation in Gen. 32:9-12?
- g. Could the sons of Korah take comfort in how God had responded to Jacob's troubles? What was it that both men realized was the only answer to their trials?
18. The sons of Korah realized that God was the only one that could defeat their enemies in v.5. Who would these enemies likely be?
19. Look up the Strong's number for the phrase "will we tread them under" in v. 5.
- a. What are the only other two places in the Psalms where this Hebrew word is used?
- b. What do these two psalms have in common? (*Hint: Look at the author of these psalms.*)

- c. Who is the common enemy referred to in all three of the references in the psalms where this Hebrew word is used?

After describing how God would fight for Israel and how the nation's enemies would fall before them through their King, the sons of Korah now start to look inwardly. They go from saying 'we' in v. 5 to 'I' in v. 6. They're now about to describe from a personal perspective where they put their trust.

20. From our consideration of the roles that the sons of Korah had in the nation, what would be a likely position that this faithful son of Korah held? What would be the natural reaction for someone in this position when an enemy was invading the land?
21. What was the attitude of the sons of Korah in v. 6? Does this echo times of old as they are recalled in v. 3?
22. How should this attitude apply to us as we face trials in our own lives? Compare with Psa. 33:16-20.
23. We have confirmation in v. 8 of where the sons of Korah placed their trust - it was in God!
- Look up the word 'boast' in v. 8 in Strong's Concordance. What is the Hebrew word for 'boast' and what does it mean?
 - What does it mean to 'boast all the day long'? (*Hint: Look up Jer. 9:24 and Rom. 5:11.*)
 - What is the Hebrew word for 'boast' translated as in 2 Chron. 8:14 and 2 Chron. 30:21? How do these verses relate to the specific duties of the sons of Korah? (*Hint: Consider what tribe the sons of Korah belonged to.*)

- d. In what sense should we also 'boast all the day long'?

Put to shame (Psalm 44:9-16)

Despite all of the declarations of trust in God that we've seen in the previous verses, the sons of Korah suddenly switch gears to the present crisis! Verse 9 starts off "But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame". The utter gravity of what has occurred weighs heavily on their mind as they grapple to understand why all of this has come about. As this section of verses progress, we'll see how the sons of Korah pour out their grief as the sense of hopelessness and despair come over them.

24. In vs. 9-14 we have a number of accusations that are leveled. What word is repeated at the beginning of each of these verses? Who is it in reference to?

From an initial reading of these verses, it can be hard to understand how such drastic statements of defeat could be coming from the same individual that had pronounced the bold affirmations of trust just a few verses earlier. This, however, is where an appreciation of the background to the psalm can help. Gaining a better perspective of what the sons of Korah were up against can really help us to appreciate why these sentiments of defeat were uttered in the first place.

25. From the chart in question 3 (on page 45), what verse in Psalm 60 matches up very closely with Psalm 44:9? What is the question that this verse in Psalm 60 answers?
26. Look up the Hebrew words for "cast off", "goest not forth" and "with our armies" in Psa. 44:9 from Strong's Concordance.
- What is the Strong's number for these words?
 - Look up where these 3 Hebrew words are used together. What are the only other 2 places where these 3 words are found together? (*Hint: Using a Bible software program to search by the Strong's numbers can be very helpful here.*)

- c. What is it that all 3 of these passages have in common? Consider the hint from question 19 b.

In David's military campaigns of 2 Sam. 8, we are given an account of the battle against the Edomites; and in Psalm 60 we see from David's perspective how he desired God's help to overcome the Edomites. Psalm 44, however, is from an entirely different perspective; it focuses on none other than the sons of Korah themselves, those in the land itself in the midst of a grievous trial.

27. Complete the following chart by giving a summary in the right hand column of what the sons of Korah are describing in the corresponding phrase from Psalm 44 in the left hand column.

Psalm 44	Description of the Trial
v.10 "turn back from the enemy"	The people were forced to retreat and flee
v.10 "spoil for themselves"	
v.11 "given us like sheep appointed for meat"	
v.11 "scattered us among the heathen"	
v.12 "sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price"	
v.13 "makest us a reproach to our neighbours"	
v.13 "scorn and a derision to them that are round about us"	
v.14 "makest us a byword among the heathen"	
v.14 "shaking of the head among the people"	

28. After all of the descriptions of the grievous trials that the sons of Korah attribute directly to God, the language changes in v. 15. We now come to the reason for despair.

- a. What 2 words in v. 15 describe the emotions that are brought out in the sons of Korah after all of these trials?

- b. What would be the natural reaction for someone enduring such suffering when they have done no wrong?

- c. What does vs. 16 indicate was the reason that brought such distress to the sons of Korah?

- d. Who do you think the sons of Korah were concerned about based on the reason they give for despair? (*Hint: Compare with 2 Kings 19:22.*)
- e. What had God promised to do to the enemy and avenger in Psa. 8:2? Had this happened yet to the sons of Korah's present enemies?

Remembering the name of our God (Psalm 44:17-22)

Despite all of the tragedy, suffering and heartache that the sons of Korah went through, they can say in v. 17 "yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant." This next section of verses deals with the sons of Korah's response to intense suffering and trial in their own lives. As we look at this section, consider the power of their example and how it might apply in your own life.

- 29. The sons of Korah declared in v. 17 that they had not forgotten God. In the face of adversity it can often be easy to forget God, but this was not the case with the sons of Korah.
 - a. Consider the counsel of Moses in Deut. 4:9 and Deut. 9:7. List the aspects from these verses that Moses gives about not forgetting God.
 - b. The sons of Korah had remembered the mighty works of God, as they recount them in Psa. 44:1-3. List the things that the sons of Korah had remembered that God had done in v.1-3.
 - c. What are some practical ways that we can remember God in our own life? Give at least 3 examples.
- 30. The sons of Korah knew all about what it meant to keep God's covenant. Consider the significance of the words in v. 17 "neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant".
 - a. List the different parties that were a part of the covenant that God made in the days of Moses in Deut. 29:9-15.

- b. Who did Moses deliver the book of the law to in Deut. 31:9, 24-26? Who else belonged to this group? (*Hint: what family had charge of the ark in Num. 3:27-31? Refer back to question 15 a. on page 13.*)
- c. What was this group commanded to do that they might remember God's law and keep his covenant in Deut. 31:10-13?
- d. What did Moses say would happen to those who forsook God's covenant in Deut. 29:25-28?

The sons of Korah knew the consequences of those who forsook God's covenant, yet they proclaim their innocence. There are very few generations in Israel's history that could confess faithfulness to God's covenant. The days of David, however, is one such time period. Even though it seemed they were being punished for sins they hadn't committed, they remained faithful to God's covenant. They didn't use adversity and suffering as an excuse to minimize their faithfulness.

31. Their heart was 'not turned back' in v. 18, even though they were literally forced to turn back from the enemy. Who was this attitude characteristic of in Isa. 50:5?
32. The sons of Korah did not allow their steps to decline from the way of God in v. 18. Whose steps are we to follow after in our own lives? (*Hint: 1 Pet. 2:21.*)
33. In v. 19, we have another description of the dire situation that the sons of Korah found themselves in. Describe what you think is being referred to in v. 19. In your description, reference where the 'place of dragons' might be. (*Hint: Compare Isa. 34:5, 13 and who Idumea might be.*)
34. The sons of Korah once again maintain in v. 20-21 that the evil that they were experiencing was not a result of their own sins.
- a. Summarize the principle that is described in v. 20-21 regarding how God sees our sins.
- b. Review the following passages and explain how these verses add to the principle summarized above: Jer. 17:10; Eccl. 12:14; 1 Cor. 4:5; Heb. 4:12-13.

- c. David was a man who had the integrity of character to invite God to search him out. Read through Psalm 139 (a psalm of David) and describe how you can emulate this example in your own life.

In v. 22, we finally get to the answer of the distressing problem that the sons of Korah have been grappling with throughout the psalm. Why has this all come about? What have we done to deserve all of this evil? Why do the righteous suffer? It's the same type of issue that we can struggle with as well. We may be trying to serve God with a good conscience and then something comes on us unexpectedly. It can come in many forms: personal tragedy, ill health or some other grievous trial. It has the potential to shake our faith to the core and leave us questioning why God has allowed this to happen. So why do the righteous suffer? The sons of Korah identify one of the reasons for us. We'll consider this in more detail in the following section.

Dealing with Suffering

35. Read through Psalm 44:22 several times and summarize the reason that the sons of Korah give for their suffering.
36. Peter gives an exposition on suffering in 1 Pet. 2:19-25 that is very relevant to what the sons of Korah were facing.
 - a. What is thankworthy and acceptable with God in 1 Pet. 2:19-20?
 - b. Who are we exhorted to follow after in 1 Pet. 2:21-23? How can we do this?
 - c. From what we've seen so far in Psalm 44, were the sons of Korah following the principle that's explained by Peter in 1 Pet. 2:19-23? Explain your reasoning.
 - d. The sons of Korah count themselves as being sheep for the slaughter in Psa. 44:22. What does Peter identify the sheep had done in 1 Pet. 2:24-25? Compare also Isa. 53:6-7.
 - e. What method has God ordained in 1 Pet. 2:24-25 to rectify what the sheep had done? Explain how this applies to us as well.

Because of their identification and association with God and His Truth, the sons of Korah were called on to suffer. God is seeking to develop a Godly seed that will overcome wickedness, putting their faith and their trust in Him.

Suffering and trial can come on us for many reasons. It might be as a result of something we've done wrong. It might be to teach us dependence on God, or to test our allegiance to God. Or, like with the sons of Korah, it might be to develop a family likeness, submitting ourselves to trial while at the same time committing ourselves to God's care, following after Christ. It can be difficult to try to determine what the reason is at any particular point in time. But "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

37. Paul, when dealing with the subject of suffering in Rom 8, quotes the very passage we've been considering in Psalm 44.
- How does Paul's reasoning in Rom. 8:16-18 put things in perspective when dealing with suffering?
 - What has God done for us in Rom. 8:31-32? How does this help us to appreciate the role of suffering in our lives?
 - Paul quotes Psa. 44:22 in Rom. 8:36. In what context does Paul quote this verse? Consider Paul's questions in Rom. 8:35 in your answer.
 - Summarize Paul's conclusion to the matter of suffering in Rom. 8:37-39.
38. From what we've considered in 1 Pet. 2 and Rom. 8, how does suffering change and mould us in our walk before God?

Paul uses the example of an ordinary man, one of the sons of Korah, who endured suffering and remained faithful in dealing with the subject of suffering. It's in the lives of ordinary men and women that we can glean such powerful examples of faithfulness to model our lives after. The sons of Korah were not immune to the struggles of life as we see their doubts and their fears made known. But they possessed a confidence and a trust in their Heavenly Father that was able to cast out their fears.

Redemption (Psalm 44:23-26)

39. The sons of Korah call on God to 'awake' in v. 23. Does God ever sleep? Use Psa. 121:3-4; Psa. 78:65 and Psa. 35:23 to describe what is meant by this choice of words.
40. What causes God to hide his face from someone? (*Hint: See Isa 59:2.*) What do you think is meant by this phrase in v. 24?
41. The language in v. 25 seems to carry the idea of death.
- What do you think is being described in v. 25? Compare with Psa. 22:15 and Psa. 119:25.
 - How does Rom. 7:22-24 relate this type of language to us?
42. The sons of Korah finish the psalm with one final plea for help in v. 26. Consider the significance of their closing words.
- In the immediate sense, what had just happened that makes the sons of Korah request God's help and redemption?
 - What else is associated with the word 'Arise' in Eph. 5:14 and John 5:25-29?
 - How can we also be redeemed? Compare with Rom. 6:3-6, 11-13.

Final Thoughts

43. It seems that Paul must have taken encouragement from the sons of Korah, as he quotes them in Rom. 8. However, he deals with the same thoughts as we've seen in Psalm 44 when speaking of suffering in 2 Cor. 4.

THE PSALMS OF THE SONS OF KORAH – PART 2

The psalms of the Bible do not have a single human author but were written by a variety of individuals across a broad spectrum of time. Some of the psalms tell us who wrote them, many do not. Since God inspired all of these men as they wrote, we can say with confidence that ultimately the author of all of the psalms is the Creator. Regardless of human authorship, the content of each psalm stands on its own, its lessons able to be learned without knowledge of when and by whom it was written.

In a case where we are told about the authorship of a psalm there can be additional lessons for us to learn if we are willing to delve a little deeper and investigate the individual or group with whom the psalm is associated. Such is the case with the study you are about to resume. There are twelve Korahite psalms. In Part 1 we considered Psalms 42-44. We will now give our attention to Psalms 84, 85 and 87.

The tragedy that stained the name of Korah would shape the character of his descendants throughout the history of his family line. The sons of Korah may have had no choice about the name that they inherited, but they would refuse to let it become their legacy. Through faithful perseverance they changed the reputation of their family so effectively that when we as believers today encounter the name "sons of Korah" in scripture we think not of reckless disobedience but of righteousness.

This was not an easy task. They endured many and varied trials as individuals and as a family. The war between good and evil is waged in the mind, and so the key to the success of this family is in the quality of their thoughts and motivations. To understand those we will need to become immersed in their psalms.

Hebrew Poetry

Every psalm is a poem. When we think of poetry many of us will assume that rhyming is involved, even though as many as half of the poems written in the English language do not rhyme. We know, of course, that the psalms were originally written in Hebrew, and so we might wonder if we are missing out on rhyming in the psalms when reading from our English translations of the Bible. The fact is that almost none of the poetry in the Bible uses rhyme in the original Hebrew.

It is interesting to note that other features of poetry that we might imagine would be lost in translation appear to either not exist or to have little importance in the Hebrew poetry of the Bible. This means that we actually don't miss out on very much by reading the psalms in English rather than Hebrew. It is fascinating that this should be the case. If we were to translate traditional English poetry into Hebrew, for example, much of the beauty and some of the significance would be lost. We might well be correct to conclude that God in His wisdom chose a language and a style of poetry that would translate very well across many different languages.

We won't be surprised, then, when we consider the fact that the book of Psalms as a whole reads beautifully in English. This is one of the reasons why it has remained so popular throughout the centuries. Poetry is meant to convey ideas in a way that stimulates our emotions and engages the creative side of our brain. When we read our favorite psalms we may often find ourselves feeling the same emotions as the writers of the psalms because of the way in which they are written. This is due to the use of poetic devices such as repetition, imagery, parallelism and allusion. There is a case study on the next page that introduces some of these devices.

Case Study: Why use poetry?

Why bother writing a poem when the writer could have just said what he meant in plain and simple language? We said above that poetry is meant to stimulate our emotions and engage the creative side of our brains. Poetry takes simple ideas and elevates them to emotional and spiritual levels. But how does it accomplish this? In the example below the psalm has been summarized using simple language without the use of literary devices. Please refer to this example as you study the psalms in Part 2.

Psalm 1 (ESV)

- 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stands in the way of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And on his law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season,
And its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
- 4 The wicked are not so,
But are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1 (Summary)

The man who stays away from evil people will be blessed.

He loves God's word and spends a lot of time thinking about it.

He is diligent and consistent and tends to be successful at whatever he does.

Evil people are the opposite of him. They are fickle.

They will be judged unworthy and have no place with the good.

God respects the good people but the evil people will die.

The simplified summaries are certainly easier to understand; yet they also seem to be lacking the power that is felt when reading the psalm. The poetry of the psalm conveys a breadth of feeling and sense of beauty that is completely lost in the summary. Lets consider some of the poetic devices that were used to achieve this:

Imagery: The idea is to paint a picture with words. Sometimes this is done by appealing to the senses while other times the subject of the imagery is compared to something entirely different in order to describe its attributes, as is the case in verses 3 and 4 with the 'tree' and the 'chaff'.

Structure: Most poems are deliberately arranged according to a pattern, and psalms are no exception. The structure of a psalm is always important and can sometimes be the key to understanding its message. Psalm 1 is broken into two stanzas (also referred to in Part 2 as movements or parts), verses 1-3 and verses 4-6.

Juxtaposition: In order to develop comparisons and contrasts, two or more ideas, actions or sentiments are placed side by side. The structure of Psalm 1 uses this technique: the first stanza describes the righteous in relation to the wicked, while the second stanza describes the wicked in relation to the righteous.

Repetition: Key words or ideas are often repeated, emphasizing themes and principles. This is a concept we are generally already familiar with as Bible students. In verse 1 we have repetition of words denoting association (with the level of commitment increasing as we progress) that illustrates the almost imperceptible way in which we can gradually slip into bad habits: 'walks', 'stands', 'sits'.

PSALM 84

Psalm 84 (ESV)

Psalm 84 (Summary)

A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

- 1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of hosts!
- 2 My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.
- 3 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.
- 4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house,
ever singing your praise! *Selah*
- 5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
- 6 As they go through the Valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
- 7 They go from strength to strength;
each one appears before God in Zion.
- 8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*
- 9 Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed!
- 10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- 11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
- 12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!

First Impressions

1. By looking at the placement of the word '*Selah*', we can see that the psalm is broken into three parts. This is what we refer to as its structure. Which verses make up each of the three stanzas? (*Suggestion*: it might help to somehow indicate where these breaks occur in the text of the psalm above.)

2. Write a simple summary of the psalm in the space provided beside the text of the psalm on the previous page. (Refer to the explanation of a simple summary and the case study on page 2.)
3. Before we investigate further, let's pause and consider our initial impressions of this psalm. What do you think are the main themes?

A journey in three parts

Great poetry captures the imagination. As we begin reading this psalm we are embarking on a journey. The eyes that we see through as we travel are not our own; they belong to the writer of this psalm. The scope of this journey is his entire life; the emotions expressed are his own. The journey has three phases, and at the end of each phase we will pause and look back at where we have just been.

This journey is not ours, but ours can be like it. Ours should be like it. That is the point.

A Deep and Painful Longing

4. Look up other instances of the Hebrew word translated in verse 1 as "amiable" (KJV) or "lovely" (ESV). How is it translated in most other cases?
5. The meaning of this Hebrew word is illustrated well by its use in the title of Psalm 45. Have a look at how it is used to describe that psalm and read the psalm itself. What type of love does this word seem to indicate?
6. The word translated as "tabernacles" (KJV) in verse 1 has a broader meaning; the word "tabernacle" typically refers to the tent in the wilderness as opposed to the temple that Solomon would eventually build. Research the Hebrew word. What is the meaning of the word, and why is the translation that renders it as "tabernacles" a bit more specific than it should be? (*Hint: if you are reading from the ESV then you already have a good answer for this question.*)
7. What does your new understanding of the word "amiable" (KJV) tell you about the type of feeling that the psalmist has for God's "tabernacles"?

8. What is it that the psalmist feels so strongly about, given your answer to question 6?
9. Research the Hebrew words used for "soul", "heart" and "flesh" in verse 2. What do they literally mean?
10. What do you think that each of the words from question 9 mean symbolically? Support your answer by providing examples of bible passages where the same Hebrew words are used in similar contexts.
11. Which well-known commandment from Deuteronomy 6 is reflected in the use of the three words from question 9? What did Jesus have to say about this commandment?
12. Who was speaking the words recorded in Deuteronomy 6? What evidence is there in verses 1 and 2 of the psalm that the son of Korah who wrote it is living his life in a way that is in stark contrast to what Korah himself stood for?

Jealous of the birds

There has been much speculation about what the birds mentioned in verse 3 could represent symbolically. The intended message of the psalmist, however, is likely very simple.

The courtyards of the temple and of the tabernacle were open to the sky, allowing birds to freely nest and make their home there.

In this first part of the journey the psalmist is not in the dwelling place of God but he desperately wants to be. He wants to be there so much that he is envious of the birds that have open access to the courts of the Lord.

This theme of longing to be in God's presence is completed with the beatitude of verse 4 which ends the first movement of the psalm:

"Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!" – Psa. 84:4

The Pilgrimage of a Lifetime

13. If you are using the KJV, then it would be helpful to find an alternate translation for the second half of verse 5. A direct transliteration into English from the Hebrew generates something close to the following: *"in whose heart highways."* Carefully read the verses that make up this middle section of the psalm. (Recall what the structure of the psalm looks like from question 1 on page 3.) Where do these highways lead? (*Hint: the ESV also supplies the answer but the translators of the ESV used the same logic that you are being asked to use now; they inserted words that weren't there in the Hebrew based on the context of the verse.*)

14. Read Hebrews 12:22-24. What does the destination from your answer to question 13 represent?

15. The word "Baca" in verse 6 is likely referring to a 'balsam' tree or shrub. This was a plant that grew in arid climates and so it is thought that the name 'Valley of Baca' is similar to saying 'the thirsty valley'. A looser and less likely translation that has also been suggested is 'the valley of weeping'. Regardless of which translation is correct, however, what does it sound like the journey through this place is like for the man making the pilgrimage?

16. Assuming the first translation from question 15 is correct, 'the thirsty valley', what is remarkable about the rest of what is said in verse 6?

17. Compare the first half of verse 7 to the first half of verse 5. The word strength is used in a very broad sense here to represent the overcoming of obstacles encountered on the difficult journey that is the subject of verse 6. What is the source of the strength?

18. Remember that the psalms are universal by nature, meaning that they are written in a way that makes them applicable and useful for everyone regardless of their situation. We can see that in the generic way that the word "strength" is used in verse 7. In what way have you found strength in a moment of weakness and how was God involved?

19. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Contemplate the meaning of the verse and compare it to Psalm 84:7. When taken together, what do these two verses tell you about how God works in the lives of those who are faithful to Him?
20. The second movement of the psalm ends with an appeal to God to hear the prayer of the psalmist. Two titles of God are used. The first title, "Yahweh Elohim of armies" ("LORD God of hosts"), invokes the principle of God manifestation (i.e. humans reflecting God's character). Perhaps you noticed this theme in your answer to question 19 as well. Read Genesis 48:15. What principle or idea do you think the psalmist intended to bring to mind when he used the second title, "God of Jacob"?

Water in the desert

The imagery used in the second movement of the psalm evokes the sorrow and hardship that must be endured in any human life; then immediately tempers the sadness with the joy of overcoming it all through faith.

Life is like a long journey through a land with no water – the pilgrim struggles to continue on though he is dying of thirst. When he leans on God, however, the most surreal thing happens. It begins to rain and water bursts forth out of the ground. This is what hope is like, summoned by faith and secured by love.

The first part of the psalm described the time before the pilgrim's journey. He wanted so badly to be in the presence of God and lamented the fact that he was not. While many would stay where they were and spend their life complaining about their bad fortune, the pilgrim refuses to fall into a routine of apathy and decides to take action. He embarks on a journey that will take him to the place he yearns to be.

He is not content to simply look at those who are in the presence of God and call them blessed. The first part of the psalm ends that way, but the second movement immediately re-uses the word "blessed". If this son of Korah cannot be in Zion, he knows that he can still be with God if he puts all of his trust in his Creator. Thus, while the first movement ended with a beatitude of longing, the second one begins with one of conviction:

"Blessed are those whose strength is in you." – Psa. 84:5

Journey's End

21. The final movement of the psalm begins with a verse marked by messianic undertones. Research the Hebrew word used for "anointed" in verse 9 and list at least three other passages in the Old Testament that use this word in relation to Jesus. At least one of the passages you list must be found outside the book of Psalms.

22. Despite the messianic application, we should not overlook what was likely the original intent of the psalmist in verse 9. He was asking God to protect and bless the current king of the nation, whoever that may have been when the psalm was written. Consider the intentions of Korah during his rebellion and explain how the son of Korah who wrote this psalm is once again demonstrating that he is nothing like Korah himself.

23. The Hebrew word for "doorkeeper" in verse 10 is not the same word used elsewhere in the Old Testament for "porter". It literally means, "to stand at the threshold", as some marginal notes will tell you and as the NET Bible translation reads. How does the use of this word in the psalm contrast with the actions of Korah and the 250 men who followed him in Numbers 16:19?

24. The job of the doorkeeper was to keep all unauthorized individuals from passing through the gates that they guarded. Think once again about what Korah and the 250 men who followed him wanted to do in Numbers 16 – where they wanted to gain access to. What is significant about the fact that this son of Korah not only keeps others from crossing the threshold, but is himself content to stand at the door and go no further?

25. When the psalmist expresses his commitment to being in God's presence with the phrase, "a day in your courts is better than a thousand", the implication is that he would trade one day near God for a thousand days *anywhere else*. Read Philippians 3:8 and explain why both the psalmist and the apostle Paul would be willing to make this trade.

26. "I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of God for one day", says the psalmist, "than spend a lifetime living in the tents of wickedness." This is, of course, paraphrasing what we believe the writer intended to say in verse 10. What specific verse from Numbers 16 is the phrase "tents of wickedness" likely quoting from, and how does the use of the phrase in that case add tremendous meaning to its use here in Psalm 84?
27. Read 2 Corinthians 4:6 and explain the significance of addressing God as a "sun" in verse 11.
28. List at least three other passages in the Old Testament where God is referred to by the same Hebrew word translated as "shield" in verse 11. From the use of the word in those verses and in Psalm 84 explain how those who rely on Him could liken God to a shield.
29. Does it strike you as odd that the psalmist says that God will not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly? Don't bad things happen to faithful people? Explain how this statement at the end of verse 11 can be true.

Standing at the door

Our lives are overshadowed by our mortality. As the lives of our friends and family expire around us we may sometimes find ourselves slipping into depression. There is perhaps not a more poignant description of the human experience to be found than David's "walking through the valley of the shadow of death."

We will *not* despair. For the pilgrim, as for us, God has removed the sting of death, for if He will raise us up then we have nothing to fear. The pilgrim would trade all of the days of this lifetime for just one day with God. Yet what is a day with God? It is as a thousand years, which is to say that God is not bound by time, and so if we endure to the end of our pilgrimage we will find ourselves in the presence of God - incorruptible and no longer subject to ravages of time. At the end of the journey is life everlasting.

There can be no more fitting beatitude to sum up the final movement than the one that closes this flawless psalm:

"Blessed is the one who trusts in you!" – Psa. 84:12

Final Thoughts

30. As we have noted, each part of the psalm contains a beatitude – a phrase that begins with the word “blessed”. Write down each of them and explain how they add meaning to the part of the psalm to which they belong. (*Suggestion*: refer to each of the three corresponding narrative boxes if you need inspiration.)
31. The psalm speaks in a metaphorical way about overcoming trials. The analogy used is a physical one - that of a long journey in a punishing climate. There are all kinds of trials that require us to have endurance that are not physical in nature but that test our faith. List some from your life.
32. Describe how you dealt with the trials that you listed in question 31. If you are still in the midst of a trial, think about how you can rely on God to help you through it and write that down. (*Optional*: If you are in the midst of a trial and are unsure about how to answer this question, bring the question with you to your discussion group for Psalm 84.)
33. Revisit your simple summary of Psalm 84 at the beginning of this section. In light of what you have considered in this section, would you change any of it? If so, please make the changes.

Write down some of the questions you have about Psalm 84:

PSALM 85

Psalm 85 (ESV)

Psalm 85 (Summary)

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

- 1 LORD, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you covered their sin. *Selah*
- 3 You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.
- 4 Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us!
- 5 Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
- 6 Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?
- 7 Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.
- 8 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
but let them not turn back to folly.
- 9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
- 11 Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.
- 12 Yes, the LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
- 13 Righteousness will go before him
and make his footsteps a way.

First Impressions

1. A possible breakdown for this psalm includes four stanzas. For the first three stanzas, look for a change in personal pronouns (such as 'you', 'us' and 'me') at the beginning of the sections. The final section break is slightly more difficult to find but is marked by a change in tone and is found at the end of verse 9. Which verses make up each of the four stanzas? (*Suggestion*: it might help to somehow indicate where these breaks occur in the text of the psalm above.)

2. Write a simple summary of the psalm in the space provided beside the text of the psalm on the previous page. (Refer to the explanation of a simple summary and the case study on page 2.)
3. Before we investigate further, let's pause and consider our initial impressions of this psalm. What do you think are the main themes?

A Resilient Faith

It is sometimes more difficult to maintain a healthy faith in God and His purpose when things are going well in our lives. This was certainly true with the nation of Israel. Time after time when God brought them peace and prosperity their faith gradually eroded until they were no longer worshipping Him. When God then sent them trials instead of blessings, their faith was renewed.

As the nation experienced alternating cycles of prosperity and despair so did the sons of Korah. It is very likely, from what we read of them, that even when the rest of the nation lost their faith, the sons of Korah remained loyal to God. How remarkable it is, then, that there is no talk in this psalm of 'us' and 'them'. When it came to accepting blame, there was only 'us'. The sons of Korah did not give up on their faithless brethren – they stayed beside them and prayed to God for change and for forgiveness!

It is one thing to talk about the virtues of having an unshakeable faith and it is another thing entirely to understand how to build the foundations of that faith in our own minds.

This psalm is a glimpse into the mind of someone who, in a time of difficulty, maintained his faith. How did he manage it? As we consider the psalm we will, God willing, begin to understand the secrets to his success.

Kindnesses not Forgotten

4. In the first movement (v1-3) of the psalm the author reminds God of His merciful acts in previous times. It is interesting that the first blessing mentioned is not one that was bestowed on the people, but on the land. Research the Hebrew word for 'favorable' in verse 1. How is it most commonly translated?
5. Read Lev. 26:40-42. Note the very last sentence. What significance does this add to the concept of God being 'favorable' to the land?
6. These first three verses list six things that God had done in the past. What are the six things?

7. Read the first line of verse 4. What do you think was the point of listing out these six things in the first three verses?

A Bold Belief in Forgiveness

8. Look up the first Hebrew word in verse 4. In the KJV it is translated 'turn us' and in the ESV it is translated 'restore us'. How many times is it used in this psalm and in which verses?
9. Read Heb. 4:16. Examine the context in which it is used and write out what you think it means in your own words.
10. Consider your answers to questions 8 and 9 and explain how they relate to the faith of the son(s) of Korah who wrote this psalm.

Steadfast love for a thousand generations

When God revealed His characteristics to Moses on Mount Sinai He proclaimed that He "[keeps] mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" but that He would "by no means clear the guilty."

There is an interesting contrast there in Exo. 34:7. At the end of the verse God says that He will "visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Although the word 'generation' isn't in the Hebrew text, translators realized that it was implied by the context, and so most English translations include the word.

What many translators missed was that the word 'generation' is also implied at the beginning of the verse, a fact that is recorded in the notes for both the ESV and NET Bible translations. The beginning of the verse should read something like "[he keeps] mercy for a thousand generations."

The point is that God's mercy - His capacity for forgiveness - far exceeds His willingness to punish. Exo. 34:7 illustrates this in the number of generations shown mercy contrasted with those who will have iniquity visited upon them; a factor of one thousand to three or four.

The sons of Korah understood this about God, as we can see from the appeal that they make to Him here in Psalm 85.

11. Read Exo. 34:6-7. What is the connection between those verses and the question that the psalmist asks God in verse 5 of the psalm?
12. The Hebrew word for 'revive' in verse 6 is *chayah*. Observe how this word is used in a similar context in 1 Kings 17:22 and Psa. 71:20. What does this word seem to mean when it is used in this way, based on these similar occurrences, and how does this meaning add to your understanding of the plea that is being made to God here in Psalm 85?
13. The Hebrew word *chesed* in verse 7 is translated 'mercy' in the KJV and 'steadfast love' in the ESV. The word carries with it the idea of being faithful to a covenant, and we sometimes describe this word as 'covenant kindness'. In the Hebrew it brings to mind the analogy of a marriage covenant. In the books of the prophets God often speaks of Israel being unfaithful to Him like a wife is unfaithful to her husband. Explain how this analogy metaphorically describes what the psalmist is asking God to do in verse 7.

Salvation and Glory as Neighbors

14. Verse 8 signals a change in tone with the use of a previously unused pronoun in the first line. What is the pronoun and how does it change the tone of what is said in verses 8 and 9? (*Tip*: refer to question 1 from this section.)
15. It is fitting that verses 8 and 9 seem to function as an interlude in this psalm. The psalmist declares his confidence that God will answer his requests, and in a sense indicates that he will be quiet and wait for God to respond. This is a very similar sentiment to what is expressed in Psa. 46:10. Familiarize yourself with the context of that verse, explain what it is saying, and describe how it compliments verses 8 and 9 of Psalm 85.
16. Research the word for 'peace' in verse 8. What is the Hebrew word and what does it mean?
17. The word from question 16 is used many times in the Old Testament. Find and list three times where the word is used in the book of Psalms in a context and manner that is similar to the way it is used here in verse 8. Explain how the use of the word in these other cases expands upon your understanding of what it means when it is used in verse 8.

18. Both 'salvation' and 'glory' are personified in verse 9. Explain how each is personified and describe what is being said about both of these concepts.
19. Read John 1:14. Compare the language used there with that of verse 9. Explain how the 'glory' would, in a somewhat literal sense, 'dwell in the land', thus symbolically fulfilling the prediction of the psalmist – at least in part.

Blessings Abound

20. The last stanza of the psalm is full of personification. In the first line of verse 10, two concepts are described as meeting each other in the same way that two people might. The sense we get is that these two concepts are being united. The first concept is 'steadfast love' ('mercy' in the KJV), a word that we have previously examined in question 13. The second is 'faithfulness' ('truth' in the KJV). Research the Hebrew word for 'faithfulness' and describe what you think is meant by this personification.
21. Similarly, 'righteousness' and 'peace' kiss each other in the second line of verse 10. It is an ancient custom that two friends would greet each other in this way when they were reunited after a long absence. The Hebrews would greet each other with a kiss and a blessing; '*shalom*' – the Hebrew word for 'peace' used here in this verse. Research these two words and describe what you think is meant by this personification.
22. Verses 11 and 12 form what is called a chiasm structure. A chiasm structure is one in which themes correspond to each other starting from the outside edges of the text (ie. the first and last lines) and work their way inward. The simplest form of a chiasm structure (of which these two verses are an example) is expressed as follows: A, B, B, A. Line A corresponds to line A and line B corresponds to line B. In this chiasm structure the connection between the outside lines ('A') and the inside lines ('B') can be seen when you answer the question of whether God or man is the subject and/or origin of what is being discussed in each respective line. In the following chart, answer this question for each line in the column provided.

Line	Psa. 85:11-12	God or man?	Hint
A	"Faithfulness springs up from the ground,"		Springs up from where?
B	"and righteousness looks down from the sky."		Psa. 97:2
B	"Yes, the LORD will give what is good,"		No hint needed.
A	"and our land will yield its increase."		Note the pronoun.

23. Who is at the center of the structure? Why might this be significant?
24. Compare verses 11 and 12 with Psalm 84:6 and recall what you learned about that verse when studying Psalm 84. How does the imagery both of 'springing up from the ground' and 'coming down from the sky' draw the passages from these two psalms together?

Absolute trust

When God says that He rewards those who seek Him, do you believe Him? What about when He says that He will forgive iniquity and transgression and sin?

This psalmist believes Him completely. This is the secret to his optimism and it shines forth out of every line of the psalm. No matter what happens he maintains his faith, knowing that this lifetime is a mere blip on the time scale compared to the glories that God has in store for those that love Him.

The final movement of the psalm is a snapshot of things to come. The psalmist may not be able to comprehend what the kingdom will be like, but he describes it in human terms with all of the eloquence that he can muster.

It will be as if the faithfulness found within the believers will join as one with the enduring love of God. The justice that only He can bring will warmly greet the peace that will be the result of that justice. As the faithful yearn to be with Yahweh, reaching up to Him with arms too short to bridge the distance, He looks down and lovingly stretches out His hand to them, giving them blessings from the earth that He created.

The psalm ends with a beautiful tribute to the perfect character of God. In the day when He blesses His people, righteousness will run out ahead of Him and He will follow it without faltering, as He has done and will do for all eternity.

"Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way." – Psa. 85:13

Final Thoughts

25. How do you think that the history of the sons of Korah instilled in them the kind of faith that we see evident in this psalm?

26. Why do you suppose that bad things that happen to us can sometimes inspire us to be faithful more effectively than the good things?
27. What difficult events in your life have strengthened your faith in God? If you cannot think of any examples, then think back on a difficult time in your life and consider that God may have been working with you but you did not change. It's not too late; difficult times in your past can still strengthen your faith in God long after they've happened, if you let them.
28. Revisit your simple summary of Psalm 85 at the beginning of this section. In light of what you have considered in this section, would you change any of it? If so, please make the changes.

Write down some of the questions you have about Psalm 85:

PSALM 87

Psalm 87 (ESV)

A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH. A SONG.

- 1 On the holy mount stands the city he founded;
- 2 The LORD loves the gates of Zion
More than all the dwelling places of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things of you are spoken,
O city of God. *Selah*
- 4 Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon;
Behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush—
"This one was born there," they say.
- 5 And of Zion it shall be said,
"This one and that one were born in her";
For the Most High himself will establish her.
- 6 The LORD records as he registers the peoples,
"This one was born there." *Selah*
- 7 Singers and dancers alike say,
"All my springs are in you."

Psalm 87 (Summary)

First Impressions

1. By looking at the placement of the word '*Selah*', we can see that the psalm is broken into three parts. Which verses make up each of the three stanzas? (*Suggestion*: it might help to somehow indicate where these breaks occur in the text of the psalm above.)
2. Write a simple summary of the psalm in the space provided above. (Refer to the example on page 2.)
3. Before we investigate further, let's pause and consider our initial impressions of this psalm. What do you think are the main themes?

What is the message?

The psalm speaks with great enthusiasm about the city of Zion. When we read about "the city of Zion" in the Old Testament we are really reading about the city of Jerusalem.

It makes sense that the sons of Korah would be passionate about the city of Jerusalem. We've learned that many of them were gatekeepers, guardians of the city, a job that we can tell they took very seriously.

We read in this psalm about how great Zion is, but also about a lot of people from different nations being born there. What do we make of this? It would seem that the author of this psalm is trying to say something very specific, but the message might not be immediately obvious to us. What are the sons of Korah trying to tell us? Lets try to get to the bottom of this.

Clarifying Words and Phrases

4. Have a look at verse 2. "Jacob" refers to something greater than simply the man himself. What? (*Tip*: refer to Num. 24:5 and Jer. 30:18.)
5. What do you think the "dwelling places of Jacob" represent?
6. Why is it significant that God loves "the gates of Zion" more than the "dwelling places of Jacob"?
7. There are a number of nations listed in verse 4. The first one listed might be unfamiliar to us since it is referred to by a rather uncommon name, "Rahab". The word in the Hebrew literally means "arrogance". There is a verse in Isaiah that will tell us exactly which nation this was. The KJV does not use the actual word Rahab, so to find it you will either need to search for the Hebrew word (not the English) or use another Bible translation where the original Hebrew word Rahab is preserved in the English (*Tip*: the ESV is one such version). What is the chapter and verse in Isaiah? Which nation is Rahab?

Worst Enemies

8. Each of the nations listed in verse 4 had a history with Israel. In the space provided on the next page, summarize some of the less-than-friendly events that had occurred between Israel and each nation respectively. For some of these nations key passages have been provided for your reference.

Rahab:

Babylon:

Philistia (1 Sam. 4:1-11; 1 Sam. 17; 1 Sam. 31; 2 Chron. 28:18):

Tyre (Eze. 26:2; Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:9-10):

Cush/Ethiopia (2 Chron. 14:9-15):

An Unpopular Sentiment

9. We find that this psalm uses repetition in its middle section. One phrase is repeated three times. What is the phrase? (*Hint*: keep in mind that the phrase is not exactly the same each time, but is very similar).

10. To whom do you think the phrase is referring? (*Hint*: the answer is in verse 4.)

Did you notice that the second time this phrase is used it is slightly different from the first and the third time it occurs? There is a remarkable connection between this second occurrence and Galatians 4:21-31. In Galatians 4:26 Paul writes that Jerusalem "which is above" is "the mother of us all". Paul was writing to the Galatians who were Gentiles. They couldn't literally claim to be Jews and yet they were given access to the hope of Israel. In this way, the only way that mattered, they were the same as the Jews and so Jerusalem could be described as their "mother". The point in Psalm 87 is the same.

11. Since this middle portion of the psalm is referring to members of Gentile nations, they cannot literally have been born in Zion (Jerusalem). What, then, do you think it means when it says that they are "born in her"? (*Tip*: refer to Eph. 2:19; Heb. 12:22-24,13:14)
12. After what we have discovered about the history of each of these nations in relation to Israel, why is it significant that each of them will have members that are "born in her"?
13. This must have been hard for many Israelites to accept. Which Old Testament prophet had great difficulty accepting that a certain Gentile city could receive forgiveness?
14. In the New Testament many Jewish believers found it difficult to accept the idea that non-Jews could be forgiven and saved. At least one Apostle struggled with the idea. List three examples of this from the New Testament and provide scriptural references.

Forgiveness for all nations

After having been enslaved, brutalized and killed for generations, many Israelites had developed a very strong sense of patriotism and a firm belief that God would punish the nations that had been their oppressors. This psalm, however, speaks of a time when the nations of the world would seek to be affiliated with Yahweh, *Israel's* God, and would be accepted!

How different this psalm sounds from what must have been the popular opinion in Israel, and yet these sons of Korah seemed to get it.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." – Gal. 3:28

Korhite Connections

While we cannot know with any certainty when this psalm was written, there are nonetheless some enlightening connections to the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

15. Read Neh. 7:1; from what we know about the various Levitical tasks that had been assigned to the sons of Korah, what in this verse connects it to Psa. 87:2?

16. In Neh. 7:5, Nehemiah finds the genealogical records of the people who had come up first to rebuild the city and enrolls all of the people currently in Jerusalem. What is the connection with Psalm 87?

17. When the city wall was still being built, Neh. 5:16-17 briefly mentions those who were helping in the rebuilding effort. Which group, recorded almost as an afterthought in the record, stands out in these verses in light of what we have just considered in the previous section about Psalm 87?

18. The sons of Korah were very much involved in this rebuilding effort. They would have worked side by side with the group from question 17, very aware of their contributions. When it came time for the people to be registered (Neh. 7:5), which group would have been conspicuously absent from the genealogical record?

19. How do you think the sons of Korah might have felt about this? (*Hint*: look for clues in Psalm 87.)

20. In Neh. 12:27-28, 42-43 we read about the singers at the grand ceremony that marked the dedication of the newly rebuilt walls of the city. What clues from the last part of Psalm 87 do we have as to what they might have been singing?

Final Thoughts

21. Consider your answer to the previous question. Read Isa. 12:1-6, Zech. 13:1 and Rev. 22:1-3. What do you think is the meaning of what the singers and dancers are saying?

22. While the psalm is grounded in the age during which it was written it is really speaking about future events and the advent of the Kingdom age. What about it indicates that this is the case? Refer to at least one New Testament passage to support your answer.

23. The writer of the psalm was clearly very passionate about the purpose of God with the earth and about his love for the city of Jerusalem. What language in the psalm conveys this to you, and which passages resonated most strongly with you?
24. Revisit your simple summary of Psalm 87 at the beginning of this section. In light of what you have considered in this section, would you change any of it? If so, please make the changes.

Write down some of the questions you have about Psalm 87:

LESSONS FROM THE SONS OF KORAH

After having considered the background of the sons of Korah, the glimpses that we get from them throughout Israel's history and the psalms that they penned, a remarkable picture emerges. This was a family that would remain faithful to God for over a thousand years. When the nation itself fell into periods of apostasy and faithlessness, the sons of Korah maintained their devotion and loyalty to God. They were there ready to assist the nation in a spiritual revival when they turned back to God.

What was the secret of this family that allowed them to remain steadfast in service to God for such a long period of time? In this section we'll be considering the various themes and practical lessons that emerge from this family when you combine the various records together. Some of the questions in this section deal with psalms of the sons of Korah that we haven't looked at in this book; but, doing so will give us a fuller picture of what this family was like. We'd recommend looking at these psalms on your own, as they contain some very inspiring and exalted subjects. If we can grasp even a tiny piece of what motivated this family and make it our own, then our time will have been well spent.

Making Choices

1. When Korah rebelled against Moses and Aaron, Korah's sons had a monumental choice in front of them. What was the choice that the sons of Korah faced? Provide supporting verses from Num. 16.
2. The children of Israel were given a similar choice in Deut. 30:19. What was this choice and what was the result of choosing each of the options?
3. What choice have we been given in Rom. 6:3-11, and how does this relate to the choice that the sons of Korah faced?
4. The choices that we make in life not only impact us, they also affect those around us. Describe how Korah's rebellion against God affected those around him, and contrast that with the effect that the sons of Korah had on those around them as a result of their choice.
5. Personal and family circumstances can often have a big impact on the choices we make. How do the sons of Korah show us where our priorities should be when family ties come into conflict with God's truth? Compare with Matt. 10:37.
6. Making Godly choices requires us to have our priorities in the right place. List some practical ways that we can aid ourselves in making sound, Godly choices in life.

Seeking for Truth

7. God has prescribed a specific way to worship Him. What was the fate of the 250 princes in Num. 16 who thought that they could worship God in any way they pleased?
8. Israel was given a continual reminder of what happens to those who disobey God's method of worship in Num. 16:39-40. What was this reminder and how do you think it affected the sons of Korah?
9. Following God's truth is a critical component of our discipleship. What do John 4:23-24 and 2 Tim. 2:15 say we must do to worship God in the proper manner?
10. The sons of Korah tell us of another characteristic that we should seek to balance with God's truth in Psa. 85:10.
 - a. What is this characteristic and what is the balance that we should seek to find?
 - b. Why is it that we require this characteristic to be shown to us? (See Psa. 85:4,7.)

The Power of Example

11. The way we live our life can have a powerful impact on others. Our example can motivate others to follow in our footsteps.
 - a. Refer back to the section on Phinehas in Part 1. What was it about Phinehas that inspired the sons of Korah to look to him as their ruler in 1 Chron. 9:20?
 - b. Who is our example, and the one that we should look to as our guide? (*Hint: See 1 Pet. 2:21*).
 - c. What does 1 Tim. 4:12 say we should be doing to be an example to others? Describe what each of these items is referring to.

Motivation for the Truth

12. We have the choice to decide our motivation in life. What was Korah's true motivation in Num. 16:10 and where did it get him?
13. The sons of Korah had a very different motivation from their father.
 - a. What was the sons of Korah's motivation in Psa. 42:1-2?
 - b. How do the sons of Korah further describe this motivation in Psa, 84:1-3, and what can we learn from their example?
14. What does Deut. 6:5-7 say our motivation in life should be? Describe how you can put these elements into practice in your own life.

Service to God

15. The sons of Korah dedicated their lives to the service of God. They were intensely involved with many different aspects of Israel's worship. Using the verses provided below, list all of the different aspects mentioned for each of their main responsibilities.

Charge of the Sanctuary (Num. 3:31-32; 1 Chron. 9:28-32):

Gatekeepers (1 Chron. 9:19-27; 1 Chron. 26:6-9, 17-19):

Singers (1 Chron. 6:31-33; 1 Chron. 15:16-24; Psa. 47:7):

16. Service in the house of God was not a burden to the sons of Korah. Describe the spirit in which they approached service in Psa. 84:2,10.
17. List the various tasks and responsibilities that are available for you to perform in your ecclesia. Then think of how you might be able to become more involved in your service in the house of God.
18. Having seen the spirit that the sons of Korah had towards their service, what should our spirit be towards our service in the ecclesia?

Forsaking the Things of this World

19. The sons of Korah knew very well what desiring the things of this world would bring about in someone's life. What did Korah desire in Num. 16 and what was the result?
20. We must seek to be part of God's house rather than our own. What type of separation and response is required if we want to be part of God's house in Psa. 45:10?
21. Separating from the world also means separating from those things that the world seeks after. The sons of Korah dedicate an entire psalm to a mindset that needs separating from in our day, just as it did in their day. Read through Psalm 49 and consider how they describe the foolishness of seeking after and trusting in wealth.
 - a. What reasons do the sons of Korah give in Psa. 49:6-7,10-18 as to the foolishness of trusting in riches?
 - b. Psalm 49 is not just written to warn the rich; it's written to warn everyone, rich and poor (v. 1-2). Why is it that we all need to avoid seeking after and trusting in riches? Compare with Deut. 6:10-12 and Luke 12:16-21.
 - c. We live in a materialistic age where it is very easy to get caught up in the riches and possessions of this life. What advice does Paul give in 1 Tim. 6:6-12,17-19 as to how to avoid this mindset?

Humility

22. The names that the sons of Korah chose to keep repeating in their family speak volumes about how this family thought of themselves. Look back to the Family Tree section in Part 1 of the book. What name was repeated more than any other in their genealogy, and why is the meaning of this name significant in determining the attitude that they had?
23. We are not deserving of God's grace towards us. What type of attitude should we have in life when we consider the words of Eph. 2:4-10 and 1 Pet. 5:5-7?

Teaching Our Children

24. If the sons of Korah were able to maintain faithfulness to God for a thousand years, then certainly they had found an effective way to pass on the truth to the next generation.
- What wondrous works of God in times past did the fathers of the sons of Korah tell their children in Psa. 44:1-3?
 - What wondrous future works of God did the fathers of the sons of Korah tell their children in Psa. 48:12-13? (*Hint: Consider the context of Psa. 48 to determine what is being referred to. Psa. 48:2 may help with this.*)
25. The sons of Korah were deeply involved in their service to God. But this was a work that they also ensured that their children were involved in as well.
- What major responsibility of the sons of Korah were their children assisting with in 1 Chron. 9:23?
 - What other major responsibility of the sons of Korah were their children involved with in 1 Chron. 6:31-33?
 - In what way do you think the children were able to assist their fathers in the work of service for the responsibilities listed above?
26. List some practical ways that you could involve the next generation in various aspects of service in the ecclesia.

For us to be able to engage the next generation in the service of the truth, we must first be working in various aspects of service ourselves. By our own example and dedication to the truth others can learn what it is that motivates us to serve God, and strive to follow in like manner.

Dealing with Trial

27. When feeling cast down and depressed by their circumstances, the sons of Korah knew how to deal with this problem. What is it that they emphasize three times in Psa. 42-43 and how is it able to overcome depression?
28. The sons of Korah list three different ways that they used to combat depression in trial in Psa. 42:8. What are these ways and how were they able to strengthen and encourage them?
29. When looking at Psalm 44 in Part 1, we saw the intense trials and suffering that the sons of Korah were called on to endure. What was the reason for their suffering in Psa. 44:22?
30. How does Peter tell us we should react to suffering in 1 Pet. 2:19-25?
31. What is the role of suffering and trial in the life of a disciple? How can it change us to be more like Christ?

Building Our Vision of the Kingdom

32. Maintaining a vision of their hope was a continual focus for the sons of Korah. How does Heb. 6:19 and Prov. 29:18 help to describe the importance of maintaining a vision of the kingdom?
33. A vision of the kingdom was so important to the sons of Korah that they dedicate at least 4 of their psalms to this very idea. Complete the chart on the next page by summarizing the aspect of the kingdom that the passage quoted in the corresponding column is referring to. You may find a Christadelphian commentary helpful for this section. The chart has been started for you.

Psalm	Passage	Aspect of the Kingdom
Psa. 45:3-4	"in thy majesty ride prosperously"	The majesty of Christ – the bridegroom
Psa. 45:5	"the people fall under thee"	The Dominion of Christ
Psa. 45:6	"the scepter of thy kingdom is a right sceptre"	Christ ruling as King
Psa. 45:11	"So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty"	
Psa. 45:15	"they shall enter into the king's palace"	
Psa. 47:1	"shout unto God with the voice of triumph"	
Psa. 47:3	"He shall subdue the people under us"	
Psa. 47:4	"He shall choose our inheritance for us"	
Psa. 47:8	"God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness"	
Psa. 48:2	"Beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion"	
Psa. 48:4	"the kings were assembled, they passed by together"	
Psa. 48:5	"they were troubled, and hasted away"	
Psa. 48:11	"Let mount Zion rejoice... because of thy judgments"	
Psa. 87:3	"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God"	
Psa. 87:6	"this man was born there"	

34. The sons of Korah had a very detailed vision of future things to come. Having seen the many aspects of the kingdom that the sons of Korah longed for, revisit the final question of Psalm 42-43 in Part 1. Explain anything that you might add to what your vision of the kingdom looks like.

Psalms of the Sons of Korah Resources

Books

Recommended Books (Psalms of the Sons of Korah)

Psalms – Volume 2 (42-72) – CSSS

Psalms – Volume 3 (73-106) – CSSS

The Sons of Korah their Faith and their Psalms – Jonathan Cope

Recommended Books (Psalms in General)

Exploring the Psalms – Mark Vincent

Psalms – Volume 1 (1-41) - CSSS

Useful Christadelphian Books (Psalms of the Sons of Korah)

The Praises of Israel – Volume 1 (Psalms 1-72) – Dudley Fifield

The Praises of Israel – Volume 2 (Psalms 73–106) – Dudley Fifield

A Handbook to the Psalms – Ern Wilson – CSSS

Studies in the Psalms – Volume 1 – Cyril Tennant

Psalms Studies – Volume 1 (Psalms 1-72) – George Booker

Psalms Studies – Volume 2 (Psalms 73–150) – George Booker

Useful Christadelphian Books (Psalms in General)

A Book on the Psalms – H. P. Mansfield

Useful Non-Christadelphian Books (Psalms of the Sons of Korah)

Psalms 1-72 – Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Derek Kidner

Psalms 73–150 – Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Derek Kidner

Studies in the CL Psalms – A.R. Fausset

The Companion Bible – Bullinger

Useful Non-Christadelphian Books (Psalms in General)

The Titles of the Psalms – J. W. Thirtle

Old Testament Problems – J. W. Thirtle

Talks

Roger Lewis - The Sons of Korah – Guarding the Value of Moral Holiness

Roger Lewis – Life & Times of Phinehas

Ron Cowie – Exhortations on the Edge of the Kingdom

Michael Owen – People in the Life of Moses