

# PSALMS

## BOOK 1 (PSALMS 1–41)

**AS** *Psalm 1.* In this wisdom psalm the author advises his audience to reject the lifestyle of the wicked and to be loyal to God. The psalmist contrasts the destiny of the wicked with that of the righteous, emphasizing that the wicked are eventually destroyed while the godly prosper under the Lord's protective care.

**B** *TN* The Hebrew noun is an abstract plural. The word

often refers metonymically to the happiness that God-given security and prosperity produce (see v. 3; Pss 2:12; 34:9; 41:1; 65:4; 84:12; 89:15; 106:3; 112:1; 127:5; 128:1; 144:15).

**C** *TN* Heb "[Oh] the happiness [of] the man." Hebrew wisdom literature often assumes and reflects the male-oriented perspective of ancient Israelite society. The principle of the psalm is certainly applicable to all people, regardless of their gender or age. To facilitate modern application, we translate the gender and age specific "man" with the more neutral "one." (Generic "he" is employed in vv. 2–3). Since the godly man described in the psalm is representative of followers of God (note the plural form צְדִיקִים [*tsadiqim*, "righteous, godly"] in vv. 5–6), one could translate the collective singular with the plural "those" both here and in vv. 2–3, where singular pronouns and verbal forms are utilized in the Hebrew text (cf. NRSV). However, here the singular form may emphasize that godly individuals are usually outnumbered by the wicked. Retaining the singular allows the translation to retain this emphasis.

**D** *TN* Heb "walk in." The three perfect verbal forms in v. 1 refer in this context to characteristic behavior. The sequence "walk—stand—sit" envisions a progression from relatively casual association with the wicked to complete identification with them.

**E** *TN* The Hebrew noun translated "advice" most often refers to the "counsel" or "advice" one receives from others. To "walk in the advice of the wicked" means to allow their evil advice to impact and determine one's behavior.

**F** *TN* In the psalms the Hebrew term רְשָׁעִים (*r'sha'im*, "wicked") describes people who are proud, practical atheists (Ps 10:2, 4, 11) who hate God's commands, commit

**1**<sup>A</sup> How blessed<sup>B</sup> is the one<sup>C</sup> who does not follow<sup>D</sup> the advice<sup>E</sup> of the wicked,<sup>F</sup> or stand in the pathway<sup>G</sup> with sinners, or sit in the assembly<sup>H</sup> of scoffers.<sup>I</sup>  
**2** Instead<sup>J</sup> he finds pleasure in obeying the LORD's commands,<sup>K</sup> he meditates on<sup>L</sup> his commands<sup>M</sup> day and night.  
**3** He is like<sup>N</sup> a tree planted by flowing streams;<sup>O</sup> it<sup>P</sup> yields<sup>Q</sup> its fruit at the proper time,<sup>R</sup> and its leaves never fall off.<sup>S</sup> He succeeds in everything he attempts.<sup>T</sup>  
**4** Not so with the wicked!  
Instead<sup>U</sup> they are like wind-driven chaff.<sup>V</sup>

sinful deeds, speak lies and slander (Ps 50:16–20), and cheat others (Ps 37:21).

**G** *TN* "Pathway" here refers to the lifestyle of sinners. To "stand in the pathway of with sinners" means to closely associate with them in their sinful behavior.

**H** *TN* Here the Hebrew term מושב (*moshav*), although often translated "seat" (cf. NEB, NIV), appears to refer to the whole assembly of evildoers. The word also carries the semantic nuance "assembly" in Ps 107:32, where it is in synonymous parallelism with קהל (*qahal*, "assembly").

**I** *TN* The Hebrew word refers to arrogant individuals (Prov 21:24) who love conflict (Prov 22:10) and vociferously reject wisdom and correction (Prov 1:22; 9:7–8; 13:1; 15:12). To "sit in the assembly" of such people means to completely identify with them in their proud, sinful plans and behavior.

**J** *TN* Here the Hebrew expression כִּי־יִמ (*ki'im*, "instead") introduces a contrast between the sinful behavior depicted in v. 1 and the godly lifestyle described in v. 2.  
**K** *TN* Heb "his delight [is] in the law of the LORD." In light of the following line, which focuses on studying the Lord's law, one might translate, "he finds pleasure in studying the LORD's commands." However, even if one translates the line this way, it is important to recognize that mere study and intellectual awareness are not ultimately what bring divine favor. Study of the law is metonymic here for the correct attitudes and behavior that should result from an awareness of and commitment to God's moral will; thus "obeying" has been used in the translation rather than "studying."

**L** *TN* The Hebrew imperfect verbal form draws attention to the characteristic behavior described here and lends support to the hyperbolic adverbial phrase "day

and night." The verb הָגַג (*hagag*) means "to recite quietly; to meditate" and refers metonymically to intense study and reflection.

**M** *TN* Or "his law."

**N** *TN* The Hebrew perfect verbal form with *vav* (ו) consecutive here carries the same characteristic force as the imperfect in the preceding verse. According to the psalmist, the one who studies and obeys God's commands typ-

ically prospers.

**O** *TN* Heb "channels of water."

**P** *TN* Heb "which."

**Q** *TN* The Hebrew imperfect verbal forms in v. 3 draw attention to the typical nature of the actions/states they describe.

**R** *TN* Heb "in its season."

**S** *TN* Or "fade"; "wither."

**T** *SN* The author compares the godly individual to a tree that has a rich water supply (*planted by flowing streams*), develops a strong root system, and is filled with *leaves and fruit*. The simile suggests that the godly have a continual source of life which in turn produces stability and uninterrupted prosperity.

**T** *TN* Heb "and all which he does prospers"; or "and all which he does he causes to prosper." (The simile of the tree does not extend to this line.) It is not certain if the Hiphil verbal form (יָצִיחַ, *yatsliakh*) is intransitive-exhibitive ("prosper") or causative ("causes to prosper") here. If the verb is intransitive, then כֹּל (*kol*, "all, everything") is the subject. If the verb is causative, then the godly individual or the Lord himself is the subject and כֹּל is the object. The wording is reminiscent of Josh 1:8, where the Lord tells Joshua: "This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper (literally, "cause your way to prosper") and be successful."

**U** *TN* Here the Hebrew expression כִּי־יִמ (*ki'im*, "instead," cf. v. 2) introduces a contrast between the prosperity of the godly depicted in v. 3 and the destiny of the wicked described in v. 4.

**V** *TN* Heb "[they are] like the chaff which [the] wind blows about." The Hebrew imperfect verbal form draws attention to the typical nature of the action described.