

# PSALMS FOR THE JOURNEY! PSALM 120-134

We find a **subset** of the Psalms / a collection:

- Psalms 120-135 → so a total of 15 psalms
- All with the superscription of a “Song of degrees / ascents”
- This is the first verse in the Hebrew Text
  
- The meaning of the Hebrew word (מַעֲלָה) is clear / straightforward: stairs, steps, degrees, ascents, ascending of a sundial, things that go / come up (used for thoughts once) → a journey to a higher place

Exodus 20:26 Neither shalt thou go up by **steps** unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

Joshua 10:10 And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up (מַעֲלָה) to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah.

1 Kings 10:19 The throne had six **steps**, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. 1 Kings 10:20 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six **steps**: there was not the like made in any kingdom.

2 Kings 9:13 Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the **stairs**, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.

2 Kings 20:9 And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten **degrees**, or go back ten **degrees**? 2 Kings 20:10 And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten **degrees**: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten **degrees**. 2 Kings 20:11 And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten **degrees** backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

Ezekiel 40:6 Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the **stairs** thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad; and the other threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad.

Ezekiel 40:22 And their windows, and their arches, and their palm trees, were after the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven **steps**; and the arches thereof were before them.

Ezekiel 40:26 And there were seven **steps** to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them: and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

Ezekiel 40:31 And the arches thereof were toward the utter court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it had eight **steps**.

Ezekiel 40:34 And the arches thereof were toward the outward court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight **steps**.

Ezekiel 40:37 And the posts thereof were toward the utter court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight **steps**.

Ezekiel 40:49 The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and he brought me by the **steps** whereby they went up to it: and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

Ezekiel 43:17 And the settle shall be fourteen cubits long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it shall be half a cubit; and the bottom thereof shall be a cubit about; and his **stairs** shall look toward the east.

Nehemiah 12:37 And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the **stairs** of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward.

2 Chronicles 9:18 And there were six **steps** to the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting place, and two lions standing by the stays: 2 Chronicles 9:19 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six **steps**. There was not the like made in any kingdom.

- Psalms with **various authors**

**David: 4**

**Solomon: 1**

**Unknown:**

However, remember the (7): to, by, for...

➤ **Psalms\* from various eras**

➤ **Psalms\* with various backgrounds**

\* Mostly not known & not obvious

➤ **Psalms collected for a specific purpose(s)!**

**But what exactly is that purpose?**

**1. Ascending in poetic style**

Several proposals...

None found universal approval.

**2. Ascending on the spiritual journey &/ growth**

In some ways this is obvious but how does this differ from other Psalms?

**3. The priests sang the 15 songs as they ascended the 15 steps → leading up from the Court of the Women to the Court of Israel in the Temple.**

**Mishnah (Middoth 2.5)**

Fifteen steps led up from it to the courtyard of Israel, corresponding to the fifteen [songs of] ascents mentioned in the Book of Psalms, and upon which the Levites used to sing.

**Mishnah (Sukkah 5.4)**

The musicians would stand **on the fifteen stairs that descend from the Israelites' courtyard to the Women's Courtyard, corresponding to the fifteen Songs of the Ascents in Psalms, i.e., chapters 120–134, and upon which the Levites stand with musical instruments and recite their song**

**Some have suggested the priests were applying Numbers 6:24-28**

**Numbers 6:24** The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

**Numbers 6:25** The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

**Numbers 6:26** The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

**Numbers 6:27** And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.

**4. The Psalms / Songs pilgrims sang as they came up / ascended up to Jerusalem for the three great feasts.**

**This seems to be the primary focus (maybe not the only use):**

**A. Jerusalem was always up → both physically and metaphorically**

**Jonah 1:3** But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, **and went down** to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and **went down** into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

**John 2:13** And the Jews' passover was at hand, **and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,**

**John 5:1** After this there was a feast of the Jews; **and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**

**John 7:2** Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

**John 7:10** But when his brethren **were gone up**, then **went he also up** unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

**John 11:55** And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country **up to Jerusalem** before the passover, to purify themselves.

**Psalms 24:3** **Who shall ascend** into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place?

**Isaiah 2:3** And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us **go up** to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; And he will teach us of his ways, And we will walk in his paths: For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

**B. Jewish men were required to go up to Jerusalem for 3 feasts.**

**Exodus 23:14** **Three times** thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. **Exodus 23:15** Thou shalt keep **the feast of unleavened bread**: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) **Exodus 23:16** **And the feast of harvest**, the firstfruits of thy

labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and **the feast of ingathering**, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. **Exodus 23:17** **Three times** in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

**Exodus 34:23** **Thrice in the year** shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

**Deuteronomy 16:16** **Three times in a year** shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in **the feast of unleavened bread**, and in **the feast of weeks**, and in **the feast of tabernacles**: and they shall **not** appear before the LORD empty:

**Passover<sup>+</sup>...& the beginning of the wheat harvest**

**Pentecost...& the end of the wheat harvest**

**Rosh Hashanah | New Year & the Tabernacles – final harvest season**

**Isaiah 30:29** **Ye shall have a song**, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; **And gladness of heart**, as when one goeth with a pipe To come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel.

**2 Samuel 6:12** And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. **So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness.** **2 Samuel 6:15** So David and all the house of Israel **brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.**

**C. We (obviously) have examples of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem!**

**Luke 2:40** And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

**Luke 2:41** Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at **the feast of the passover.** **Luke 2:42** And when he was twelve years old, **they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.** **Luke 2:43** And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew **not** of it. **Luke 2:44** But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. **Luke 2:45** And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. **Luke 2:46** **And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple....**

**Acts 2:1** And when **the day of Pentecost (τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς)** was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. **Acts 2:2** And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. **Acts 2:3** And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. **Acts 2:4** And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with **other tongues (ἑτέραις γλώσσαις)**, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

**Acts 2:5** And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, **devout men, out of every nation under heaven.** **Acts 2:6** Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak **in his own language (τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ).** **Acts 2:7** And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, **Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?** **Acts 2:8** And how hear we every man **in our own tongue (τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἡμῶν), wherein we were born (ἐν ᾗ ἐγεννήθημεν)?** **Acts 2:9** Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, **Acts 2:10** Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, **Acts 2:11** Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak **in our tongues (ταῖς ἡμετέραις γλώσσαις) the wonderful works of God.** **Acts 2:12** And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, **What meaneth this?**

**Acts 20:16** For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem **the day of Pentecost (τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς).**

**1 Corinthians 16:8** But I will tarry at Ephesus **until Pentecost (ἕως τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς).**

**5. The Pilgrim Psalms were also sung when the Jews | Jewish believers returned from Babylon!**

**Ezra 7:6** **This Ezra went up from Babylon;** and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. **Ezra 7:7** **And there went up** some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. **Ezra 7:8** And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. **Ezra 7:9** For upon **the first day of the first month** began he to go up from Babylon, and on the **first day of the fifth month** came he to Jerusalem, **according to the good hand of his God upon him.**