



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

Psalm 117

Phase 1: ORAL



Step 1: Listen

Listening to a guide translation and versions of the psalm

There are two guide translations in Appendix A:

1. **Hebrew-mirror** - copied from the Exegetical Layout and adjusted for minimal readability,
2. **Hebrew-tight** - the literal, type 1 corresponding (but more readable) translation, exegetically the same as Hebrew-mirror.

Activity: Read the Hebrew-mirror and the Hebrew tight version in Appendix A. One reader per translation or one reader for all translations (as skills permit). Others to listen with closed books. Consider 'how to listen' – posture? with responses? in silence?



Step 2: Familiarise

Explaining and discussing the meaning and beauty of the psalm

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE PSALM

After listening to the guide translations, please respond to any of the following questions:

- What do you like about the psalm?
- What do you find difficult?
- Which verse do you find particularly important in this psalm?
- What does this psalm teach you about the LORD? What does this psalm tell us, and tell you, about the LORD? What is the LORD like?
- What is repeated a lot in this psalm?

CREATIVE RESPONSES

Activity: experiment with as many words you can find to express these ideas of praise in verse 1. Then choose the ones that you think best express the psalm you have listened to.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

ENGAGING WITH THE WHOLE PSALM

Address the following topics:

- *The participants in the psalm, the different “speakers” and “audiences”*
- *The theme and flow of the psalm*
- *The peak or peaks of the psalm*
- *The patterns of images, like metaphors, if relevant*
- *The genre and purpose of the psalm*
- *The historical background and the context of the psalm, the story behind the psalm, if relevant*
- *Key poetic features of the psalm, but only those relevant to the big picture*

Discuss:

- Who are the participants in this psalm? Who is speaking? And to whom is it addressed? Who are the participants referred to in the text, for instance?
The LORD, Israel (us), and the nations are referred to.
- What did the psalmist want to say? What is the psalm about?

Flow of the Psalm

Psalm 117 is a call for all known peoples and nations around Israel, and by extension everywhere, to praise and extol YHWH (verse 1).

The reason given for the call to praise is YHWH (verse 2) for his all-powerful and prevailing loyal love and trustworthiness toward his people. The psalmist is implying that the HESED of YHWH is strong enough to include the nations.

The “us” of v.2 is ambiguous, it can refer to only Israel or Israel and including the nations.

- What type of song or prayer is this Psalm? This psalm is a hymn of communal praise. Do you have something similar in your language?
- What did the poet want to achieve? Or hoping to achieve for himself or for his audience?
Psalm 117 is an expression of praise of the comprehensive greatness of the love of YHWH but also that the neighbouring nations that so much threaten Israel, can be included in this comprehensive covenant of YHWH. Maybe without the psalmist even knowing it, he prophesized about the all-inclusive new covenant that came with our Lord Jesus Christ. The deep yearning for that covenant was already alive by the time this psalm was composed.

Creative activity: do you have an example of such a wisdom or didactic poem in your language? Is there a specific name for it? Find a few characteristics of such a poem.

- Why did he want to say what he said in the psalm? What motivated him to say it? What triggered the psalmist to compose it?
- What is the story behind this psalm?



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

Historical Setting of the Psalm

A precise setting cannot be determined. It was composed by a poet in Israel, maybe a priest or a prophet, during the time of the First Covenant, the Sinaitic covenant. The psalmist was aware that the LORD's HESED love was preve over the people of Israel, giving health, joy, life, offspring, protection, provision, food. It could be during the time of David, or one of the godly kings, or even after the exile. But the psalmist was aware of the nations, both the neighboring peoples around them, and the larger powers like Assyria and Egypt somewhat further away. These nations were all enemies and a great threat to small and vulnerable Israel. He urges in a poetic way for all these nations, who couldn't hear him nor hear the song being sung, to repent and praise the YAHWEH the God of Israel and also serve him, because his HESED is strong enough not only for Israel but also for the nations.

The placement of Psalm 117 in Book V suggest a post-exilic date, but this is impossible to determine.

- For what kinds of situations was this psalm intended to be prayed or sung?
Some commentators say it was sung when the people of Israel entered the temple to make sacrifices. This is quite vague. We don't know for sure.
- How does this psalm fit in the wider Book of Psalms? What is going on around this psalm?
The place of Psalm 117 in the psalter is in Book V, the book with psalms about the restoration of Davidic kingship, generally referred to as the Servant of the LORD in Book V. It is the shortest psalm. It is also a *Hallelujah* psalm. Then, Psalm 117 is the second last psalm of a group of psalms called the *Hillel*, Psalms 113-118. The *Hillel* is sung at Passover, after the Passover meal.
- How does this poem allude to other events or people in the OT and the NT? In many psalms we can discern a higher meaning to goes beyond the primary meaning.
Ps 117 is quoted in Romans 15:11 in the New Testament, as part of the apostle Paul's encouragement that both Jewish and Gentile believers should accept one another. That Israel sang Psalms like this one (and the others quoted there) shows that it was always God's plan to include the nations into his people.

UNLOCKING SOME OF THE BIG PICTURE OBSTACLES TO THE PSALM

Discuss:

- The logic of the relationship between verse 1 and 2 is difficult to understand: why should *all the nations* praise the Lord because *we, the people of Israel*, are the ones benefiting from his covenant loyalty and trustworthiness? Another possible interpretation is that it is an inclusive "us", we Israel together with all the nations. In translation, this ambiguity needs to be maintained. The full meaning of this shortest of Psalms is unclear unless we understand why the nations should praise the Lord for his covenant love to Israel.

INSIGHT: Psalm 117 seems to imply that the surrounding peoples and nations are, or will be in some way associated with the people of Israel. One day, together they will acknowledge YHWH as the supreme God of all. This has been fulfilled in the New Covenant.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

- In verse 2, discuss the meaning of HESED, his covenant loyalty, his loyal love, being strong. What does *strong* here mean? Some versions have translated it as *great*, but literally, the Hebrew word is *strong*.
- Also in verse 2, the exact meaning of the key term EMET: does it mean ‘truth’ or ‘faithfulness’, or maybe a combination of the two?

SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

Psalm 117 has an inclusio: it starts and ends with “Praise the LORD!”

Verse 2 provides the **reason** for the commands of verse 1 and the final inclusio at the end.

Verse 1 *Praise the LORD, all nations!*

Adore him, all peoples!

Verse 2 **Because** *his loyal love is prevailing over us,
the trustworthiness of the LORD is forever!*

Praise the LORD!

FINAL SUMMING UP

To summarise the Psalm, discuss the following questions:

- In summary, what is the main point of the psalm is praising the LORD.
- Psalm 117 is a psalm of praise, celebrating the LORD’s powerful love.
- This Psalm celebrates the universal impact and strength of the LORD’s loyal love, and exhorts the nations to praise him for his love for his special people.
- What heading or title to suggest for this psalm is “Call to Praise” or “Praising the loyal love of the LORD”.



Step 3: Internalise

Absorbing the big picture of the psalm

In this section we look at the whole psalm so that we can retell the message of the entire psalm. This is not an attempt to memorize the psalm, but to be able to understand the whole message and to express it in the target language. The facilitator should do at least the first two activities and consider doing the third activity, if desired.

CREATIVE RESPONSES

Internalisation Activity 1: Listen again several times – Listen to the poem from guide translations #1 and #2 several times. Try to memorise the contents. It is a short psalm.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

Internalisation Activity 2: Skit — act out what's happening in the set. Let some be the temple choir, others scattered in the hall the nations. A third group, the Israelites. Then call out to each group their part (verse 1 – the nations, verse 2, the Israelites and the nations).

Internalisation Activity 3: Gestures/hand motions/body poses—translators choose a pose or motion to represent each event/element of the set, in order. Then they do these motions as they retell the set.



Step 4: Compose

Crafting a song of the psalm

Once the artist-translators have sufficiently internalised the psalm in the workshop setting, compose a song, poem, rap, chant, or prayer to capture as much of the psalm as possible. This could be a further refinement of a song, if that was done in Step 3.

Activity: Participants are to choose a style or genre that is relevant for the psalm, and to set the whole psalm or sections to a rhythm or music.

Activity: Make a recording of the composition(s).



Step 5: Draft

Translating stanza-by-stanza

To take full advantage of the oral form, avoid reverting to written Biblical text at this point. Divide into smaller groups and let one in each group read through guide translation #2: Hebrew-tight (or play a recording) while others translate. The oral draft can at that point be recorded and/or immediately written down (Step 6 merged with Step 5).

Activity: Have a look in the poems of your language and look for instances where there is a strange word-order, not the usual. Sometimes it would work to use some unusual word-order in your language as well. Experiment a bit with different word-orders and see what sounds the most beautiful, the most poetic.

STANZA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Often it speeds the work to have different groups do different stanzas. If you do this, make sure you all hear the psalm from top to bottom and to make suggestions to other groups when you come together...



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B

Verse 1

1 Praise YHWH, all nations!
extol him, all the peoples!

1 Praise the LORD, all nations!
worship him, all the peoples!

Discuss:

- Consider if the vocatives (nations and peoples) should be put first in the line.
- The first pair in Psalm 117 is *praise* and *extol*. *Praise* and *extol* translate two different words in Hebrew. *Praise* refers to high thoughts about someone's attributes or qualities, a way of honoring. And *extol* refers to respectful admiration, but can also mean to laud, commend, praise, make great, exalt, admire, worship. The exact meaning of this word is harder to pin down because the word is rarely used. Do you have two different words in your language that can function similarly as a pair?
- Another word pair is groups of people. The different types of groups of people *goyyim* and then *ummim*. Which are the choices you have for different types of groups of people, to translate the Hebrew *goyyim* and *ummim*? In Stage 3 there are more explanations about the meanings of these terms

Activity: make a list of the options you have in your language and poetry for different groups of people, like nation, people, group, tribe, lineage, and so on. Then choose which two of them will make a nice-sounding pair.

Creative activity: Make a poetic oral translation of these verses and record it.

Verses 2a-c

2 For his HESED (covenant loyalty) is prevailing over us,
and the EMET (truthfulness) of YHWH for ever!

Praise YHWH!

2 Because his loyal love is overcoming on our behalf,
And the truthfulness of the LORD is forever!

Praise the LORD!

Discuss:

- The transition between verse 1 and verse 2 is interesting but difficult. It contains this short connection word *for*, or *because*, introducing a reason or a ground for the preceding action. This is the high point of the psalm.
- You compiled a list of the different options in your language for the two key terms *loyal* and *truthful* or *trustworthy*. This pair often occur together in the Psalms. Together they form a beautiful picture of balance and richness.

Creative activity: Make a poetic oral translation of these verses and record it.





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Activities:

- 1) Listen again to the recordings of each verse/section.
- 2) Think about how to use ideas from the previous creative activities, and try to include the different ideas you've had so far.
- 3) Make a poetic oral representation of the complete psalm and then record it.

Phase 2: TEXT



Step 6: Transcribe

Make a written draft

Activity: Transcribe the recordings of each section/stanza onto paper or a computer.

Before moving on to the exegetical check, check the transcribed draft for the following. This should be done as a whole group, looking at the psalm projected onto a screen or wall. It is up to the facilitator to make this step move on at a good pace, but getting this out of the way at the beginning will help the exegetical and poetical checks that follow to stay focused on essential matters.

1. **Versification:** put the verse numbers into the psalm.
2. Check that the number of the psalm, and any **superscription**, are in place at the top. (Superscriptions are often left out completely according to team policy, but they are recommended to be put in the written text but not the song.)
3. Put in the **stanza breaks** (blank lines usually).
4. Correct the **punctuation**, in particular finding out where the sentences should end. Different groups use different approaches. Our recommendation is to use capital letters only for the beginning of sentences, not for the beginning of each poetic line.
5. Correct the **spelling**. You may find that there is a lot of discussion over this. The group needs to have consistency but also needs to abide by any government guidelines.
6. Raise any questions you have about the **back translation** at this point. The back translation just needs to be comprehensible; it does not need spell checks etc. You, the facilitator, are the only person who needs it. However, without a good back translation you cannot understand what is going on. As a bonus, at least a couple of exegetical questions you've prepared usually turn out to be unnecessary after this step.
7. Check the **line divisions** (this refers to how the power is broken up into lines and where to make those breaks).



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B



Step 7: Contents Check

Checking exegetical faithfulness

The purpose of this step is to check the content of your draft for faithfulness and trustworthiness as you compare it to the guide translations found in Appendix A and details in Appendix B.

Activity: Review the draft translation in detail, using the oral recording of Step 5 or the transcription of Step 6. Do an exegetical check by comparing the draft with the guide translations given in Appendix A and the exegetical layout in Appendix B and adjust the text as necessary.

EXEGETICAL CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- Are the beginning and ending “halleluyas” the same?
- The word pair “praise” and “extol”
- The word pair “nations” and “peoples”
- The word pair “loyal love” and “truth”
- The verb in the “loyal love *is strong* over us”



Step 8: Poetry Check

Compare and weigh the poetic features

Attention now needs to be given to the poetic devices found in the Hebrew, as well as poetic devices found in the receptor language that might not have been used in the Hebrew text (or might have served a different function).

Activity: Consider the poetic features of your translation. Compare also the compositions from Step 4 with the draft. See if there are any features from the compositions that can be used in the final official version.

POETIC CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- Short, compact verse lines?
- The word-order of the vocatives in verse 1?
- Rhythm: do the verse lines have no more than 12-14 syllables?
- Balance of the word pairs? Are they in the same position of each verse line?
- How is the reason clause introduced? Is that good poetry?
- Does the translated psalm sound nice? Will it be singable?





STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B



Step 9: Finalise

Preparing the final version of an authenticated translation

Preparation of the final version which will serve as an authorized translation, that in turn will serve as the basis for performing the psalm in the community.

Activity: Check the spelling of your transcription.

Activity: Recheck the punctuation, for instance whether there are appropriate commas for pauses, the in-setting, and the layout of paragraphs to represent stanza segmentation.

Activity: Recheck the line divisions of your transcription and recheck the essential accuracy of the back translation (not worrying about spelling).

Activity: In AVTT, open a new passage for Step 9 and make a blank recording (a second or two without any speech). This will open transcription and back translation boxes in that passage. Copy the transcription and the back translation of your translation into the new step. This will be the place you make changes as you go through Steps 7 and 8 and edit your translation. The performances will be based on this version.

Activity: Copy the final written text into Paratext.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B

Phase 3: PERFORMANCE



Step 10: Perform

Performing the psalm in your community

Introduction to the creative performances. Different groups can do different performances.

Psalm-specific ideas:

▪ ...

Activity: Complete a transcript and back translation for the lyrics of any song created by the team to be checked before recording.

FINAL CHECKLIST

In the end of each psalm, there should ideally be four products:

1. Transcription: An authorized, authenticated, or officially written draft in AVTT and Paratext.
2. Dramatic Reading: A recording of a dramatic reading or recitation of the whole psalm, using the authenticated version word-for-word, recorded in AVTT.
3. Whole Psalm Performance: A recording of a performance of the whole psalm, using the entire authenticated version but with freedom to adapt it for authentic performance, including poetic and dramatic features beyond the authenticated version, recorded in AVTT.
4. Song or Hymn: A recording of a performance of part of the psalm including the main idea of the psalm (this could be from v 2 as mentioned in Psalm-specific ideas above), in the form of a song or a hymn, with or without drama, with freedom to adapt it for authentic performance and to make it easy to sing and remember, recorded in AVTT. An improved version of the Step 4 composition could be used here.
5. Chorus: A recording of a short chorus of a main verse of the psalm. Something catchy and highly memorable, recorded in AVTT.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



APP. A



STEP 6



STEP 7



STEP 8



STEP 9



STEP 10



APP. B



Appendix A: Guide Translations

Guide Translation #1 (Hebrew-mirror)	Guide Translation #2 (Hebrew-tight)
<p>1 Praise YHWH, all nations! extol him, all the peoples!</p> <p>2 For his HESED (covenant loyalty) is prevailing over us, and the EMET (truthfulness) of YHWH for ever!</p> <p>Praise YHWH!</p>	<p>1 Praise the LORD, all nations! worship him, all the peoples!</p> <p>2 Because his loyal love is overcoming on our behalf, And the truthfulness of the LORD is forever!</p> <p>Praise the LORD!</p>



STEP 1



STEP 6



STEP 2



STEP 7



STEP 3



STEP 8



STEP 4



STEP 9



STEP 5



STEP 10



APP. A



APP. B



Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

The genre of Psalm 117 is a hymn of communal praise. The psalm embodies the structure of a hymn of praise: the call to praise (verse 1), the reason for the praise (verse 2a,b), and the concluding praise (verse 2c).

SUGGESTED HEADING

“In Praise of the LORD”

Other headings are: “Doxology of all the nations”; “Summons to praise”; “Praise to the LORD,” ... “All people should praise the LORD” or “Let everyone praise the LORD” [TH]

Coding for TAM Verbs and Hebrew features:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qatal perfective = blue • Yiqtol imperfective = red | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infinitive construct = purple • Wayyiqtol waw+imperfective = pink • Jussive/cohortative = light brown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imperative = brown • Participle = green • Weqatal = navy |
|--|---|--|

הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה כָּל־גּוֹיִם	1 Praise ¹ YHWH, all-nations ²
שִׁבְחוּהוּ כָּל־הָאֻמִּים:	Extol.him ³ , all-the.peoples ⁴ !

¹ Praise* means expressing admiration for attributes and deeds, in this case those of YHWH.

² *goyyim* are nations or ethnic groupings. The word forms a pair with *ummah* of the second line. The LXX (Greek OT) has translated GOYYIM* as *ta ethne*, ethnic groups. These groupings normally refer to Israel’s surrounding neighbours (like Moab, Edom, and Syria) as well as those known peoples further afield they have had dealings with (like Egypt, Babylon). However, both *goyyim* and *ummim* were used for Israel as well as the non-Israel nations around it.

³ *Extol*. It means to laud, commend, praise, extol, make great, exalt, admire, worship. The exact meaning of this word is harder to pin down because the word is rarely used. *Extol* forms a pair with *praise*, it is a case of synonym rhyme.

⁴ all the peoples: *ummah* is more used in terms of a political or religious grouping, a nation, or a people.





כִּי גָבַר עָלֵינוּ חַסְדּוֹ	2 For ⁵ prevailing over.us ⁶ his.HESED ⁷
וְאַמֶּת־יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם	and.the.EMET ⁸ -of. YHWH [is] for.ever!
הַלְלוּ־יָהּ:	Praise- YH[WH]!

⁵ The meaning of the whole Psalm hinges on the Hebrew particle *ki* here. Here it introduces a reason clause, “for, because”.

⁶ *"His HESED* is prevailing over us"* is a poetic way to express the LORD's mighty commitment to his people while winning victories over everything.

⁷ His HESED is his covenant loyalty, his constant love and commitment to his covenant people to whom he has made promises. Suggestions to translate it is his committed loyalty, his deep loyalty. HESED often appears in a pair with EMET (see below the meaning of EMET). For HESED “constant love”, includes the idea of love and devotion, and faithfulness to a promise or a covenant’ (TH).

⁸ EMET* = truth, trustworthiness of the LORD = Semantic Dictionary of the OT: worthy of trust, trustworthy. Real, true, can be trusted. Suggestions to translate it: *truth, truthful, sincere, trustworthy*. TH: emeth from root term that means “to be firm, reliable, trustworthy”.