

## Psalm 117

This is the next-to-last psalm in the Hallel (**Psalm 113-118**) sung at all the major Jewish festivals.

Historically Jews have been divided over whether this is separate psalm or connected to either Psalm 116 or 118. Internal evidence shows it to be its own psalm. The two most important Masoretic manuscripts view Psalm 117 as an independent psalm of two verses.

**Psalm 117:1** - "O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people."

The first verse is a couplet, repeating the same idea with different words that are rare in classical Hebrew but more familiar to speakers of Aramaic, similar to a targum.

"praise" = *halal* - the usual word for praise, giving its name to the Hallel.

"nations" = *gowy* - the usual word for Gentile people or nations

The second "praise" and "people" use different, more rare words.

"praise" = *shabach* - an emphasis on really loud, triumphant praise - See **Psalm 106:47**  
- "Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to 'triumph in thy praise' (*shabach*)."

"people" = *'ummah* - a collection of people, a community, nation (ummah in Arabic is the word adopted in the Koran for the community of faith in Islam)

**Psalm 117:2** - "For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD."

"merciful kindness" = *checed* - kindness, favor, grace, mercy, good, pity, benevolence, desire toward, love, lovingkindness

"great" = *gabar* - too prevail, overwhelm, be strong

- **Genesis 7:19** - "And the waters prevailed (*gabar*) exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered."

"truth" = *emeth* - truth, faithfulness, reliability

"forever" = *owlam* - eternity, the vanishing point, never-ending

Truth that is "*olam*" is eternal, not changing with time. Like God Himself, it is the same yesterday, today and forever (**Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8**).

## Love and Truth

Merciful kindness and truth (*chesed* and *emet*) appear as a pair in tens of places in Scripture. In many places they appear together - i.e. a figure of speech in which two words connected by a conjunction are used to express a single notion: *chesed* which is *emet*.

"The truth of the Lord" is "the love of the Lord" - both are inseparably linked.

According to this psalm, God's love and truth have been extended beyond Israel to take in all humanity.

Love no matter how sincere is insubstantial without being grounded in truth. Truth alone can be too harsh without love.

The Gospel is a manifestation of God's love combined with a hard truth - Humanity has fallen, we are lost and hopelessly burdened with sin and need the redemption provided by Christ on the cross.

Receiving His love and truth means we must turn around and let both be reflected in our own lives toward others.

"Merciful kindness" is equivalent to the idea of "*agape*" in New Testament Greek.

- **Ephesians 4:15** - "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"

- **1 Peter 3:15** - "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (civility and respect)

People won't hear the gospel if we belittle or shout down our listeners. "Being obnoxious" is not a gift of the Spirit

- **1 John 4:7-21** - read the whole thing, but (verse 11) "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

See <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/shiur-08-psalm-117-o-praise-lord-all-you-nations-shortest-psalm-book-tehillim>