

CHAPTER 2 - PART 1

by Rabbi David Sykes

The Book of Tehillim became an inseparable part of the daily life of every Jew. Its spread and influence surpassed those of any other book of the Written or Oral Torah. What is the secret of its great strength? Why is it equally satisfying to every soul? Why does it respond to the needs of each and every Jew, of every social class, of every group, of the community and of the individual, man, woman, and child? What is the difference between it and all of the other books of the Prophets and Writings? What makes it unique? There is one very obvious difference. At first glance, this appears to be only an external difference, but, in fact, it points to an essential difference. All books of the holy Torah are studied. The commandment to open the books and involve oneself in their content is called the commandment of "Torah study"; those who involve themselves in it are called "students of Torah." We say the blessing, every morning, "And may we and our descendants all be knowers of Your Name and students of your Torah for its own sake." In contrast to this, even though it is possible to study and to think deeply into the Book of Tehillim, there is an additional expression that is used in connection with involvement with Tehillim: "saying Tehillim." And even though the study of Tehillim is no more widespread or unique than that of the rest of the Torah, the saying of Tehillim has spread out in all of the lands in which the Jews have been scattered, and it has had the greatest influence and the most honored place in the depths of Jewish survival.
