

We Shall Live in Heaven

BY PASTOR HARRI HAAMER

Book Study Guide

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FOREWORD

The Tartu Academy of Theology...On whose legacy it is founded?

What book had an influence on Harri Haamer's life?

How did Maimu, Harri's wife, survive during those years when Harri was imprisoned?

How did Harri's life impact the lives of generations to come?

INTRODUCTION

What are some major facts about Estonia and Estonian history?

(You will need to use also outside resources.)

TIMELINE:

1848 - The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx.

1917 – The Bolshevik Revolution - Harri was eleven.

1918 - Estonia became an independent democratic republic.

1929 - Harri graduated from the University of Tartu and was ordained.

1933 - He became pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Tartu.

1934 - He married Maimu Maramaa and they had three children: Eenok, Maarja and Andres.

1940 - The Soviet Union occupied Estonia.

1941 - The Nazis occupied Estonia.

1944 - USSR again occupied Estonia and St. Paul's Church in Tartu was bombed by Russians.

1948 - Harri was arrested in February and was deported to labor camps in Kolyma, Siberia.

1955 - Harri returns in August to Estonia and becomes pastor at Tarvastu in eastern Estonia.

1987 - At the age of 81, Harri passed away.

Harri served the church for 58 years.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

During Soviet occupation the church's activities were strictly controlled and following activities were forbidden: youth and children's ministries, religious education, diaconate services, and publishing or contact with sister churches abroad.

Parents and grandparents often dared not tell their children about God for fear of being reported and either being deported or killed.

In 1939 there were 220 Lutheran pastors in Estonia.

By 1949 there were only 70 pastors remained.

CH. 1 - THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Theme: Calamity

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-2

Discussion/Meditation Question: How can we find calm in the midst of calamity?

- What are your first thoughts as you think about this family's experiences?
- Try sitting on the floor in the area Harri had in his cell.
- How did Harri come to grips with the idea that he didn't say goodbye to his family?

CH. 2 - I AM TAKEN TO INDIA

Theme: Depths

Scripture: Matthew 28:20b

Discussion/Meditation Question: Is God with us in the pits, especially in times of uncertainty?

- Describe Harri's witness to others in his cell.
- Why was Harri singing? Who sang in prison in the Bible?
- "golden epaulette" Who is this?
- Why did Harri continue to move from one area to another?
- What happens in India?

CH. 3 - TELL US ABOUT YOUR CRIMES

Theme: Judgment

Scripture: Genesis 18:25c

Discussion/Meditation Question: How do we deal with earthly injustice and God's eternal justice?

- Describe the conditions of the prison cell Harri was in. Do you think Americans in our country could survive these conditions?
- What did Harri think his greatest crime was? Why did he bring up this behavior?
- What do you think about the hunchbacked Jew's conversation with Harri?
- What is the significance of Harri calling himself a thief?

CH. 4 - HOPELESSNESS HAS NO PLACE IN OUR PROGRAM

Theme: Hope

Scripture: Psalm 39:7

Discussion/Meditation Question: Do you agree with Pastor Harri's counsel for the German man?

- What motivates people to write their names and dates on walls before they die?
- "To go with Him into death is not the same as to perish." Explain.
- What is the translation of the note the German wrote back to Harri?

CH. 5 - MY NAME IS DEARLY BELOVED

Theme: Truth

Scripture: John 18:38

Discussion/Meditation Question: Is lying ever justified? Would I do what Harri did?

- "Limping three-striper" Who is he?
- How did Harri avoid the black hole and who helped him?

CH. 6 - MY BREAD IS THROWN IN THE TRASH

Theme: Bread of Life

Scripture: Psalm 19:7-10

Discussion/Meditation Question: What would I risk to keep my Bible?

- Do you believe that dreams can come true? What did you think of Harri's dream?
- What do you think made the soldier give Harri back the Bible?

CH. 7 - WHY DID YOU HIT ME?

Theme: Payback

Scripture: Matthew 5:39-42

Discussion/Meditation Question: Is civil disobedience allowed for Christians?

- What are your thoughts regarding Harri's message that was sent to his wife? Are the people supportive of the government?
- Why do you think Harri is not punished when he challenges the guards? Consider also the two-striper and the conversation with the captain.

CH. 8 - ...WHERE MY SOUL CAN BREATHE SO FREE

Theme: Mockery

Scripture: Matthew 27:27-31

Discussion/Meditation Question: How do Christians face being mocked?

- Why are the prisoners not taken to the grand station entrance of Siberia?
- What is the significance of the song played at the train station?

CH. 9 - FLOWERS FROM THE VIADUCT

Theme: Blessing

Scripture: Matthew. 25:36-40

Discussion/Meditation Question: How can I bless someone in distress?

- Why did Harri want to preserve a flower more than anything else he had?

CH. 10 - BAIKAL

Theme: Darkness

Scripture: Psalm 88:1-5, 13

Discussion/Meditation Question: How has God led me through times of long, dark tunnels?

- Why do you think Harri chose to read the gospel and pray as the train rode along the banks of the Baikal?
- What does Harri mean by saying the people at the Ulan-Ude Station are their forefathers? (45,000 years BCE)

CH. 11 - I BECOME MASTER OF THE BARREL

Theme: Leadership

Scripture: Matthew 25:21

Discussion/Meditation Question: How can I be faithful in little things, even when no one seems to be looking?

- How did Harri become the master of the barrel? Where does his resourcefulness come from?

CH. 12 - THE RUSSIAN GOD

Theme: False gods

Scripture: Psalm 96:5

Discussion/Meditation Question: Could I be tempted to swerve from the true God?

- How does Harri show his resourcefulness again in this chapter?

CH. 13 - THIS ISN'T A FACIST BATHHOUSE

Theme: Providence

Scripture: Luke 15:8-10

Discussion/Meditation Question: How has God led me through times of long, dark tunnels?

- What is your reaction to the Facist Bathhouse and Harri's experience in finding his belongings after prayer?

CH. 14 - YOU WILL GET YOUR THINGS BACK

Theme: Slave labor

Scripture: Amos 5:11

Discussion/Meditation Question: Do I hear God's heart toward the destitute?

- Were you surprised that there was some decency in regard to returning stolen items? Why were few items returned?

CH. 15 - WE STRIKE A BLOW WITH OUR BUNK BOARDS

Theme: Resistance

Scripture: Judges 16:28

Discussion/Meditation Question: Does God allow retribution? How do we decide, especially on the spur of the moment?

- Are you surprised that a pastor would use violence to stand up to thieves or encourage resistance?

CH. 16 - MY MEETING WITH THE TUXEDOED MAN

Theme: Illusion

Scripture: Proverbs 14:12

Discussion/Meditation Question: Have I asked God for the gift of discernment?

- What does the Tuxedoed Man think his purpose is at the camps?
- What do you think his chances are of achieving it?

CH. 17 - NOGIN NUMBER THREE

Theme: Promise

Scripture: Psalm 130:1, 2, 5-6

Discussion/Meditation Question: What do Christians do when they are at the end of their rope?

- Do you think Harri would have jumped into the sea to end his life?
- Why was he unable to pray... "even the faithful lose faith"?
- The ship was built in America in Illinois. How do you think the shipbuilders would feel knowing their ships are being used to transport "slaves."

CH. 18 - THE TRANSIT

Theme: Despair

Scripture: Psalm 22:1

Discussion/Meditation Question: Did King David also know despair? Have I?

- What two things did Harri do to ease the plights of the men in the ship's hold?
- How did he feel about the betrayal of Sutt? What do you think happened to Sutt?

CH. 19 - I AM GIVEN MY FIRST FUFAIKA

Theme: Sharing

Scripture: James 2:14 – 17

Discussion/Meditation Question: If I had nearly nothing, would I still share?

- Do you think Harri's experience in the bathhouse predicts what the prison will be like?
- Again, he stands up for himself and does not pay for it. Why do you think this is?

CH. 20 - IN THE "PULPIT" ONCE MORE

Theme: Authenticity

Scripture: Matthew 7:15-20

Discussion/Meditation Question: Authenticity What does it take to be a pastor?

- Harri describe the march to the bathhouse as a "festive one" and yet he also compares it to a journey of humiliation. Why?
- What does Harri do as service to his fellow Estonians? Explain the phrase: "But it is not your robe that gives the sermon; it is your heart that does the talking." What does he sacrifice by doing this service?

CH. 21 - "I'M THE DOCTOR HERE!"

Theme: Deceit

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:9

Discussion/Meditation Question: Am I really who I say I am?

- Discuss the treatment of the prisoners In the clinic?
- Why do you think Harri wrote down false temperatures for the thieves?

CH. 22 - A THIEF'S WORD OF HONOR

Theme: Honor

Scripture: Psalm 12:8

Discussion/Meditation Question: Can people trust me even in little things?

- Can you believe a "thief's word of honor?"
- What did Harri see in Jurka that he thought he could trust? Why do you think he returned Harri's needle?

CH. 23 - ABOUT THE COMPATRIOT IN THE WHITE COAT

Theme: Integrity

Scripture: Psalm 51:6

Discussion/Meditation Question: Does God expect me to live as I believe?

- Harri comments that his country must not lose hope if this filtering has brought forth enterprising men and women. What do you think he means?

CH. 24 - I PREDICT A MISERABLE FUTURE

Theme: Destiny

Scripture: Hebrews 9:27

Discussion/Meditation Question: Are some people hopelessly evil?

- Once again we see Harri's resourcefulness as he changes the palm reader's predictions for Sasha's future. Why do you think he did this?

CH. 25 - I WILL GIVE YOU A TORTE!

Theme: Generosity

Scripture: Psalm 112:5

Discussion/Meditation Question: What opportunity do I have to give a blessing today?

- Harri's conscience goes to work to prod him to give his rations and candy to Juhan for his birthday. After all he has been through, it still felt good to do something for another. Explain.

CH. 26 - THE COMMON LANGUAGE OF GOD'S CHILDREN

Theme: Communion of Saints

Scripture: Revelation 5:9-10

Discussion/Meditation Question: Have I ever felt this bond in Jesus, particularly with a new acquaintance or a stranger?

- Answer Harri's question: "Why must the languages of God's children so often be so different?"

CH. 27 - THE HOLY NIGHT ON THE BARRACK FLOOR

Theme: Immanuel

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6

Discussion/Meditation Question: How has the incarnation been real to me? Is Christmas more about sentiment than salvation?

- As the
- men sang Silent Night, the barracks quieted. Why do you think this happened if they did not know about Christmas?

CH. 28 - HOW I AM ANOINTED A THIEF

Theme: Longing

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:9,13a & 21a

Discussion/Meditation Question: Do we get a glimpse of St. Paul's loneliness, too? Can we pray for imprisoned fellow Christians?

- Discuss Harri's part in stealing shingles. Why do you think he did what he did? Why is he proud to be called a thief by Cell 17?

CH. 29 - MY REAR END IS TOO SKINNY

Theme: Mercy

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:1-6

Discussion/Meditation Question: How does God's hand of mercy (as an absence of expected harm) reach me?

- Discuss: "A slave who is aware of his status as a slave, and rebels against it is a revolutionary... A slave who does not know he is a slave, and who suffers his slavery in silence is simply a slave."

CH. 30 - UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION HAVE FAILED

Theme: Wisdom

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6

Discussion/Meditation Question: Do I struggle with pride in my own intellect, abilities, position or schooling?

- Why does Harri think one MUST have human dignity anywhere they are?
- What prayer did Harri pray while Jevgeni cried after his speech?

CH. 31 - FOR YOUR KIND HEART

Theme: Grace

Scripture: Isaiah 44:1-3

Discussion/Meditation Question: How has God's hand of grace (unexpected favor) touched me?

- Explain "It's the small things that give comfort." How often do we suffer because we have a kind heart. Give examples.

CH. 32 - IT IS SUNDAY IN MY HEART

Theme: Sabbath

Scripture: Exodus 20:8-11

Discussion/Meditation Question: How is Sunday revered in my heart?

- Explain: "There are no Sundays in hell." Even in hell, our hearts can experience Sunday.

CH. 33 - SOLDAN

Theme: Contentment

Scripture: Philippians 4:11-12

Discussion/Meditation Question: Am I content, even in this acquisitive culture?

- What are your thoughts about Harri and Soldan's friendship?

CH. 34 - JUST DON'T COMPLAIN!

Theme: Acceptance

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Discussion/Meditation Question: Am I a complainer? How am I going to change?

- How often do we begin to complain when we do not need to? Explain the lesson that Harri learned in this regard.

CH. 35 - REVENGE

Theme: Revenge

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:35

Discussion/Meditation Question: Do I wish for vengeance against anyone?

- Why is this chapter called Revenge? Explain.

CH. 36 - HE IS A BLACKCOAT

Theme: Light

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, 25

Discussion/Meditation Question: Do others see the Light of Jesus in me?

- What does Harri teach his fellow men about doing good deeds?

CH. 37 - THE WOODCARVING PASTOR

Theme: Dreams

Scripture: Acts 2: 17-21

Discussion/Meditation Question: Has God ever given a vision or dream to me?

- Why do you think Harri will not injure himself when the work becomes too hard?

CH. 38 - YOU ARE MY CHRISTIAN BROTHER

Theme: Evangelism

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9: 22b-23

Discussion/Meditation Question: What would I have done in this circumstance?

- Describe the way Harri convinced his Muslim friends to "Love your enemy."
- In today's world, do you feel the ultimate goal should be that of coming together, regardless of either one's convictions?

CH. 39 - IS YOUR TOBACCO ANY GOOD?

Theme: Deliverance

Scripture: Psalm 23:5

Discussion/Meditation Question: When has God saved me in the midst of danger?

- "Taking bread from my brothers." "Return my bread to me." "Heavenly bread in my hands." Again, the New Testament is returned! Why?

CH. 40 - CHRIST HAS RISEN

Theme: Rejection

Scripture: Ephesians 4:2-6

Discussion/Meditation Question: What can we do to bring real unity in the church?

- Are you surprised that the Catholic priests would not join in with other denominations to lead a Bible study group?
- Even in these circumstances, why do human beings refuse unity in Christ?

CH. 41 - THE LAST DAYS IN THE TRANSIT GAMP

Theme: Help

Scripture: Psalm 121

Discussion/Meditation Question: Where do I turn when my hopes are dashed?

- How did Harri find a Way to minister to his Estonian brothers?
- "Lift mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." What was Harri's new interpretation of this verse?

CH. 42 - WOMEN, CARDS, BOOZE

Theme: Rebuke

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:2-4

Discussion/Meditation Question: How can God help me speak conviction to others?

- Why can there be no communism if there are women, cards and booze?"

CH. 43 - EVEN NOW, I AM STILL A BLACKCOAT

Theme: Shrewd

Scripture: Matthew 10:16

Discussion/Meditation Question: How can Christians deal wisely in worldly matters?

- How does Harri gain control of the two-striper's behavior?

CH. 44 - A KING'S FREEDOM

Theme: Rest

Scripture: Hebrews 4:9-11a

Discussion/Meditation Question: How can I find rest in the middle of life's demands?

- When does the longing for freedom become strongest?

CH. 45 - A BARREL LID FOR STYOSSOV'S OLD LADY

Theme: Slave Labor

Scripture: James 5:1-6

Discussion/Meditation Question: Is God keeping books?

- What is a "kulak"?
- Why does Harri say that his crime was because he could not turn black to white?

CH. 46 - SHVED GETS TO WORK

Theme: Work

Scripture: Colossians 3:17

Discussion/Meditation Question: How do we handle co-workers who are difficult?

- Why do you think Harri risked his life to stand up to Shved?

CH. 47 - THE COBBLERS' 750 PERCENT

Theme: Exposed

Scripture: Numbers 32:23b

Discussion/Meditation Question: What happens when evil is covered up?

- How did the cobblers cheat the system?

CH. 48 - HAAMER, BE A HUMAN BEING

Theme: Reasonable

Scripture: Ephesians 6:5-6

Discussion/Meditation Question: How does a Christian work in a bad system?

- Why did Harri reconsider the Gypsy's request to be a human being?

CH. 49 - THE MINE IS OPERATING ON A SURPLUS

Theme: Corruption

Scripture: Ephesians 6:7-8

Discussion/Meditation Question: To whom are we really responsible?

- Do you think Harri by cheating is sinning? What does it mean to do the greater good?

CH. 50 - I ELIMINATE THE SURPLUS

Theme: Reward

Scripture: Matthew 16:27

Discussion/Meditation Question: Can I keep the eternal view in my daily life?

- Again Harri is forced to write dishonest reports. How do you feel about this?

CH. 51 - BERIA HAUNTS US

Theme: Verdict

Scripture: Galatians 6:7

Discussion/Meditation Question: How can I trust God to take care of evil doers?

- What are your thoughts regarding this chapter? Is Harri finding it harder to be the Christian that he is?

CH. 52 - THE JOURNEY HOME

Theme: Purpose

Scripture: Psalm 57:2

Discussion/Meditation Question: Can God's purpose for us ever be thwarted?

- Why was this last period of life for Harri the most depressing?
- How do you think he felt about being arrested by mistake?

CH. 53 - EPILOGUE

Theme: Completion

Scripture: Philippians 1:6

Discussion/Meditation Question: God promises to be faithful to the work He has begun. How can we remain faithful through years, even decades, of hardships and hard work? Has the Haamer family been an inspiration to you?

- When were Harri's writings finally published? Why so much later?

IN REVIEW...POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Harri Haamer writes all his vignettes in the present tense. Can you imagine why? Remember, he had absolutely no way to journal these events as they happened. What might you do to sear into memory what you saw, felt, and heard in a situation like his?
2. In the epilogue, Eenok tells us when his father wrote these memories. Even then, years after completing his sentence, Harri hid his manuscript so the KGB would not find it. It wasn't published until after he died in 1987. Look at the first page inside the front cover to see the dates. When was the first publication? In what language? When did Estonia achieve freedom again? Why was the book printed outside the country before it was available in Estonia?
3. Why did the Soviets fear and hate Estonia's believers, so they must be "disciplined"? First, the Estonians had taken advantage of the upheaval following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and fought for independence after decades of Russian occupation. (Now there's resentment that Estonia won its freedom again in 1991.) Second, the Lutheran church was large and well-loved by the Estonian people—around 90% were Lutherans. Third, Estonia had a very strong Moravian Church revival movement in the 18th and 19th centuries. It brought people to real faith, real worship and real love for the Word. (The Bible had been translated into Estonian already in 1739.) What happens when Satan is faced with real Christianity?
4. Discuss the treatment Harri was given by his captors. Why is it universal that anti-Christian regimes and authorities do these sorts of things? Why are prisoners of conscience singled out for special humiliation and savagery?
5. React to Harri's courage and determination to minister even as a prisoner. How did he do it? Was this done in his own strength and courage?