

Psalms for this Time of Crisis in Israel

exploring
judaism



These very dark days have brought us, both as individuals and as a community, to a wide range of emotions. In times such as these, we have turned to the Book of Psalms again and again because we can recognize -- as in a distant mirror -- so many of those emotions in those who have long preceded us and whose words

and thoughts still resonate. Praying these ancient words enables us to give voice to the depths of our own pain and helps us feel less alone in what we experience today.

We offer to our colleagues seven psalms as suggestions for a liturgical response to our individual and collective emotions, including grief, fear, rage (even at God), desperation, shock at the incomprehensibility of human evil, faith and doubt, yearning, and hope. Each psalm is preceded by a brief superscription of our own, indicating

why it is especially appropriate for the present circumstances. Some may want to select from these for use in services or communal gatherings. For those who wish to recite as a unit, we have put them in a recommended sequence.

Following these psalms are prayers for Israel, for the Israel Defense Forces, for the redemption of captives, and a general prayer for our people in distress.

Shalom al Yisrael.

COMPILED BY RABBIS ROB SCHEINBERG, GORDON TUCKER AND JAN UHRBACH

Psalms 142: The experience of captivity

1. A maskil of David, while he was in the cave. A prayer.
2. I cry aloud to Adonai; I appeal to Adonai loudly for mercy.
3. I pour out my complaint before God; I lay my trouble before God
4. when my spirit fails within me. You know my course; they have laid a trap in the path I walk.
5. Look at my right and see— I have no friend; there is nowhere I can flee, no one cares about me.
6. So I cry to You, Adonai; I say, "You are my refuge, all I have in the land of the living."
7. Listen to my cry, for I have been brought very low; save me from my pursuers, for they are too strong for me.
8. Free me from prison, that I may praise Your name. The righteous shall glory in me for Your gracious dealings

1. מִשְׁכִּיל לְדָוִד בְּהִיטּוֹ בְּמַעְרָה תַּפְלָה:
2. קוֹלִי אֶל־ה' אֲזַעַק קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֶתְחַנֵּן:
3. אֲשַׁפֹּךְ לִפְנֵי שִׁיחֵי צָרָתִי לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים:
4. בְּהִתְעַשֵּׁן עָלַי רוּחִי וְאַתָּה יְדַעַת נְתִיבָתִי בְּאַרְחֵזוֹ אֶהְלֵךְ טָמְנוּ פֶּה לִי:
5. הִבִּיט יָמִין וּרְאָה וְאִינִי לִי מִכִּיר אֲבֹד מִנוֹס מִמֶּנִּי אֵין דּוֹרֵשׁ לִנְפְשִׁי:
6. זַעֲקָתִי אֶלֶיךָ ה' אֲמַרְתִּי אַתָּה מַחְסֵי חֲלָקִי בְּאַרְץ הַחַיִּים:
7. הִקְשִׁיבָה אֶל־רִנָּתִי כִּי־לֹלוֹתִי מְאֹד הִצִּילָנִי מִרְדְּפֵי כִּי אֲמָצוּ מִמֶּנִּי:
8. הוֹצִיאָה מִמִּסְגָּר נַפְשִׁי לְהוֹדוֹת אֶת־שִׁמְךָ בִּי יִכְתְּרוּ צַדִּיקִים כִּי תִגְמַל עָלַי:

Psalm 6: The weariness of grief

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. For the leader; with instrumental music on the sheminith. A psalm of David. | 1. לְמוֹנֵצֶחַ בְּגִיטוֹת עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: |
| 2. Adonai, do not rebuke me in anger;
in Your fury, do not cause me suffering. | 2. ה' אֵל־בְּאַפֶּךָ תוֹכִיחֵנִי וְאֵל־בְּחִמְתֶּךָ תִּסְרֹגֵנִי: |
| 3. Have compassion for me, for I am forlorn. | 3. תִּנְנֵנִי ה' כִּי אִמְלֹל־אֲנִי רָפְאֵנִי ה' כִּי נִבְהָלוּ עֲצָמַי: |
| 4. Heal me, for my body is in turmoil, | 4. וְנַפְשִׁי נִבְהָלָה מְאֹד (וואַת) [וואַתֶּה] ה' עַד־מָוֶתִי: |
| 5. my very soul is in terrible turmoil— and You, Adonai? How long? | 5. שׁוּבָה ה' חֲלֹצָה נַפְשִׁי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי לְמַעַן חֲסֹדְךָ: |
| 6. Return, O God, strengthen me;
save me, for the sake of Your compassion. | 6. כִּי אֵין בְּמָוֶת זִכְרְךָ בְּשָׂאוֹל מִי יוֹדֶה־לָּךְ: |
| 7. The dead do not invoke You;
who will acknowledge You in the netherworld? | 7. יִגְעָתִי בְּאַנְחָתִי אֲשַׁחָה בְּכָל־לֵילָה מִטּוֹתַי בְּדַמְעָתִי עֵרְשִׁי אֶמְסָה: |
| 8. I am worn out from sighing, each night I toss and turn;
my bed is covered with my tears. | 8. עֲשֻׁשָׁה מִכַּעַס עֵינַי עֲתָקָה בְּכָל־צוּרְרִי: |
| 9. My eyes have become weak because of my anger,
my vision distorted by my troubles. | 9. סוּרוּ מִמֶּנִּי כָל־פְּעָלֵי אֱוֹן כִּי־שָׁמַע ה' קוֹל בְּכִיִּי: |
| 10. Stay away from me, all you sinners,
for God has heard my weeping cry. | 10. שָׁמַע ה' תַּחֲנֻנֹתַי ה' תַּפְלִיתִי יִקַּח: |
| 11. Adonai has heard my plea; Adonai has taken to heart my prayer. | 11. יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּבְהָלוּ מְאֹד כָּל־אֹיְבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְשׁוּ רַגְעַי: |
| 11. May my enemies feel great shame and confusion,
may they repent and be quieted. | |

(Weekday Lev Shalem, Rabbinical Assembly forthcoming)

Psalm 120: Treachery of deceit; overtures answered by war

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. A song of ascents. In my distress I call to ADONAI; may God answer me. | 1. שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶל־ה' בַּצָּרְתָּה לִי קִרְאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי: |
| 2. ADONAI, save me from lying lips and deceitful tongues. | 2. ה' הַצִּילָה נַפְשִׁי מִשִּׁפְתֵי־שָׁקָר מִלְשׁוֹן רַמְיָה: |
| 3. What profit, what good, will a deceitful tongue do you— | 3. מַה־יִתֵּן לָךְ וּמַה־יִּסְיֶיף לָךְ לְשׁוֹן רַמְיָה: |
| 4. warriors' arrows sharpened with burning coals? | 4. חֲצִי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוּנִים עִם גִּחְלֵי רַתְּמִים: |
| 5. How sorrowful for me that I live in Meshekh that I dwell among the
tents of Kedar; | 5. אוֹיְה־לִּי כִּי־גֵרְתִּי מִשָּׂד שְׁכֻנָּתִי עִם־אֹהֲלֵי קֶדָר: |
| 6. that I have been so long among those who hate peace. | 6. רַבַּת שְׁכֻנַּה־לָּה נַפְשִׁי עִם שׁוֹנְא שְׁלוֹם: |
| 7. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war. | 7. אֲנִי־שְׁלוֹם וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הִמָּה לְמִלְחָמָה: |

(Lev Shalem for Shabbat and Festivals, Rabbinical Assembly)

Psalm 125: Our need for divine protection and the defeat of evil

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. A song of ascents. Those who trust in ADONAI are like Mount Zion that cannot be moved, enduring forever. | שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹת הַבְּטָחִים בָּה' כְּהַר־צִיּוֹן לֹא־יִמוּט לְעוֹלָם יֵשֵׁב: |
| 2. Jerusalem, hills enfold it, God enfolds God's people now and forever. | יְרוּשָׁלַם הָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ וְה' סָבִיב לְעַמּוֹ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם: |
| 3. The scepter of the wicked shall never rest upon the land allotted to the righteous, that the righteous not set their hand to wrongdoing. | כִּי לֹא יָנוּחַ שֵׁבֶט הָרָשָׁע עַל גּוֹרֶל הַצְּדִיקִים |
| 4. ADONAI, be good to those who are good, to the upright in heart. | לִמְעַן לֹא־יִשְׁלַחוּ הַצְּדִיקִים בְּעוֹלָתָהּ יְדֵיהֶם: |
| 5. But those who in their crookedness act corruptly, let ADONAI make them go the way of evildoers. May it be well with Israel! | הִיטִיבָהּ ה' לְטוֹבִים וְלִישָׁרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם: |
| (JPS 1985, Sefaria, adapted) | וְהַמַּטִּים עֲקָלְקוֹתָם יוֹלִיכֵם ה' אֶת־פְּעָלֵי הָאָוֶן שְׁלוֹם עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל: |

Psalm 121: A prayer for protection

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. A Song of Ascents I lift my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come? | 1. שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלֹת אֲשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יְבֹא עֲזָרִי: |
| 2. My help is from ADONAI, who made the heavens and the earth. | 2. עֲזָרִי מֵעַם ה' עָשָׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ: |
| 3. ADONAI will not let your foot slip, Your guardian does not slumber; | 3. אֶל־יִתֵּן לְמוּט רַגְלְךָ אֶל־יָנוּם שֹׁמְרְךָ: |
| 4. for the guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers. | 4. הִנֵּה לֹא־יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל: |
| 5. ADONAI is your protector; ADONAI is the shield on your right hand. | 5. ה' שֹׁמְרְךָ ה' צִלְךָ עַל־יָד יְמִינְךָ: |
| 6. The sun will not strike you down by day nor the moon by night. | 6. יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יַכְּכָה וַיָּרַח בַּלַּיְלָה: |
| 7. ADONAI will protect you from every evil and watch over You. | 7. ה' יִשְׁמְרְךָ מִכָּל־רָע יִשְׁמַר אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ: |
| 8. ADONAI will watch over your coming and your going from this time forth, and ever and ever | 8. ה' יִשְׁמַר־צִאתְךָ וּבואְךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם: |
- (Lev Shalem for Shabbat and Festivals, Rabbinical Assembly)

1. Shir lama·alot.
Esa einai el heharim, mei-ayin yavo ezri.
2. Ezri mei-im Adonai oseh shamayim va-aretz.
3. Al yiten lamot raglekha, al yanum shomrekha.
4. Hineih lo yanum v'lo yishan shomer yisrael.
5. Adonai shomrekha, Adonai tzilkha al yad y'minekha.
6. Yomam ha-shemesh lo yakekah v'yarei-ah ba-lailah.
7. Adonai yishmorkha mikol-ra, yishmor et nafsheikha.
8. Adonai yishmor tzeit'kha uvo·ekha mei-atah v'ad olam

Psalm 23: Walking through the darkest valley

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. A psalm of David ADONAI is my shepherd; I shall not want. | מזמור לדוד ה' רעי לא אחסר: |
| 2. God lays me down in green pastures, leads me to still waters, | בנאות דשא ירביצני על-מי מנחות ונהלני: |
| 3. renews my life, guides me in right paths— for that is God's way. | נפשי ישוּבב ויחני במעגלי צדק למען שמו: |
| 4. Were I to walk through a valley as dark as death,
I would fear no evil, for You are with me; | גם כִּי-אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיא צִלְמוֹת לֹא-אִירָא רַע כִּי-אַתָּה עִמָּדִי |
| 5. Your rod and Your staff, they would comfort me. | שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֶנְתְּךָ הֵמָּה יְנַחֲמֵנִי: |
| 6. You would spread a table for me in full view of my besiegers;
You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. | תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שִׁלְחֹן נֶגֶד צָרִי דִשְׁנֶה בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כֹּסִי רוֹנֶה: |
| 7. Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me
all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of ADONAI, in the fullness of time. | אֵד טוֹב וְחֶסֶד וִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-ה' לְאָרְךָ יָמִים: |

1. Mizmor l'David. Adonai ro-i lo ehsar.
2. Binot desheh yarbitzeini, al mei m'nuhot y'nahaleini.
3. Nafshi y'shoveiv, yanheini v'maglei tzedek l'ma'an sh'mo.
4. Gam ki eileikh b'gei tzalmavet lo ira ra ki atah imadi.
5. Shivt'kha u-mishantekha heimah y'naḥamuni.
6. Ta'arokh l'fanai shulḥan neged tzor'rai, dishanta va-shemen roshi, kosi r'vayah.
7. Akh tov va-ḥesed yird'funi kol y'mei ḥayai, v'shavti b'veit Adonai l'orekh yamim.

Psalm 122: Reaching for hope

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. A song of Ascents, of David
How delighted I was when they said to me,
"Let us go up to the house of ADONAI." | 1. שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹת לְדָוִד שְׁמוֹחֲתִי בְּאִמְרֵים לִי בֵּית ה' נִלְדָּה: |
| 2. Our feet stand at your gates, O Jerusalem— | 2. עֲמֻדֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם: |
| 3. Jerusalem rebuilt, a city knit together, | 3. יְרוּשָׁלַם תְּבִנִיָּה כְּעִיר שְׁחִבְרָה-לָהּ יִתְדוּ: |
| 4. where the tribes once made their pilgrimage, the tribes of ADONAI —
testimony by the people Israel of their gratitude to ADONAI . | 4. שִׁשָּׁם עָלוּ שְׁבָטִים שְׁבִטֵי-יָהּ עֲדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַדוֹת לְשֵׁם ה': |
| 5. There were found the seats of judges, the thrones of the house of David. | 5. כִּי שָׁמָּה יֻשְׁבוּ כִּסְאוֹת לְמִשְׁפַּט כִּסְאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד: |
| 6. Seek the peace of Jerusalem;
may those who love you be tranquil. | 6. שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם יִשְׁלִי אֲהַבָּיךָ: |
| 7. May there be peace within your ramparts, tranquility in your palaces. | 7. יְהִי-שְׁלוֹם בְּחִילְךָ שְׁלוֹהָ בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ: |
| 8. For the sake of my family and friends
I pray for the peace I seek for you. | 8. לְמַעַן אֲחִי וְרַעִי אֲדַבְּרָה-נָא שְׁלוֹם בָּךְ: |
| 9. For the sake of the house of ADONAI I seek your welfare.
(Lev Shalem for Shabbat and Festivals, Rabbinical Assembly) | 9. לְמַעַן בֵּית-ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲבַקֶּשֶׁה טוֹב לָךְ: |

6. Sha·alu sh'lom yerushalayim yishlayu ohavayikh.
7. Y'hi shalom b'h].leilekh shalvah b'arm'notayikh.
8. L'ma'an ah].jai v'rei-ai adabrah na shalom bakh.
9. L'ma'an beit Adonai eloheinuavakshah tov lakh.