

תהלים שטיינזלץ  
The Steinsaltz Tehillim



**Steinsaltz Center**



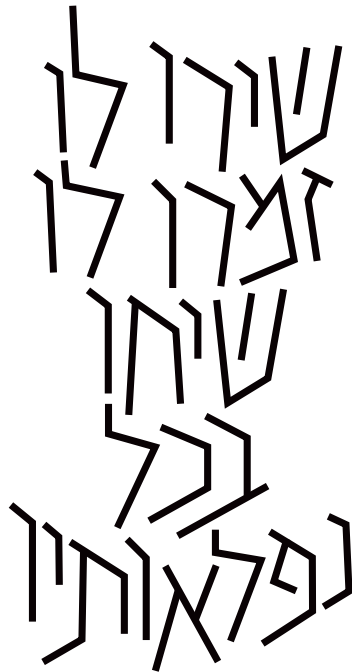
קוֹרְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

# תהלים שטיינזלץ

עם ביאור  
הרב עדין אבן-ישראל שטיינזלץ

## THE STEINSALTZ TEHILLIM

COMMENTARY BY  
RABBI ADIN EVEN-ISRAEL  
STEINSALTZ



STEINSALTZ CENTER  
KOREN PUBLISHERS JERUSALEM

*The Steinsaltz Tehillim*

Commentary by  
Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz

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*For Dawne  
who is Dina*

*from her sisters  
Lesley, Margot and Serena*



### Thursday

Dedicated in loving memory of our mother,  
grandmother, and great-grandmother,  
Edith Kaufthal, Esther bat Mordechai HaKohen,  
who said Psalms every day for her family's well-being  
and had enormous faith in their redemptive power.

*Linda and Ilan Kaufthal*      *Judy and Uri Kaufthal*  
*Abby and Joshua Kaufthal*      *Dina and Jonathan Kaufthal*  
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Ella Julia      Maya Eden  
Leo Howard  
Maximilian Julius  
Bill Abraham

### Friday

We are honored to dedicate this section of Rabbi Steinsaltz's  
work in honor of our children Judd, Lauren, and Emma.  
May their connection to our faith be ever strong.

*David & Leslie Fastenberg*

### Shabbat

Dedicated to Rav Adin Steinsaltz  
הרב עדין אבן-ישראל שטיינולץ שליט"א  
with profound respect  
for his monumental contribution to the Jewish people

*Lewis and Gaya Aranoff Bernstein*

**Sunday**

Dedicated in honor of my beautiful wife, Tatiana,  
whose wisdom, humor, warmth,  
and love makes our family.

*Michael G. Reiff*

**Monday**

In memory of Efraim ben Hilik, Gnesya bat Aaron,  
Genya Golda bat Emmanuel, Yosefa bat Boris  
and Mark ben Alexander  
and in honor of our children  
David and Chana Michal Shifra and their children  
Sara Nessa, Odelia, Shylie Efrat, and Brielle

**Tuesday**

In memory of my grandparents Devora and Isaac Glassman  
and their journey; my mother, Florence Glassman Carr,  
whose kindness, courage, humor, and resilience  
supported all around her; and the inspiring lives of  
my brothers Robert and Jay.

*Daniel B. Carr*

**Wednesday**

Dedicated in honor of  
Rose and Lawrence Shaykin  
Marilyn and Jack Shechtman  
May their memory always be for a blessing  
With love from their children

*Leonard and Maura Shaykin*

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## *Introduction to the Steinsaltz Tehillim*

The book of Psalms is unique among the books of the Bible. Taken as a whole, the Bible depicts the relationship between God and mankind, and more particularly between God and the people of Israel. In the books of the Bible, certainly in the Torah but also in the Prophets, the relationship is primarily portrayed as proceeding from the top down, from God to man. By contrast, Psalms is the only book of the Bible where the relationship flows in the opposite direction, from man to God, in other words, where an individual turns to God and communicates with Him. Psalms is traditionally divided into five books, containing a total of 150 chapters. Some suggest that these are meant to correspond to the five books of the Torah. This parallelism also serves to illustrate that the relationship between God and man runs in both directions. Thus, despite their wide variation in subject matter and tone, the individual chapters comprising Psalms are all narrated from a human perspective, with all the limitations and complexity this entails.

The Hebrew title of the book, *Tehillim*, means “praises,” and there is much in the way of praise in its chapters. Yet Psalms is much more than a compendium of ways to praise God. In fact, one can find in it almost any thought or feeling a person might wish to express to God. It includes a wide variety of poetic forms, with personal poetry alongside epic poems, as well as philosophical musings and introspection on matters pertaining to the nation of Israel and to mankind. But what pervades all of the psalms, whether clearly expressed or implicit, is the voice of the individual psalmist.

Just as the topics of the psalms vary, so does the persona of the psalmist. The psalmist is seen as alternately dejected and elated; there are psalms of

◀ defeat

defeat and surrender alongside powerful, exultant victory songs. Moreover, some of the psalms express disquiet, originating in a crisis of faith or a grievance, whereas others bespeak peace and tranquility. To use a musical metaphor, some psalms are staccato, others legato; some largo, others presto. In similar fashion, the psalmist can be compared to a harp, each of whose many strings has its own unique sound while simultaneously working in harmony.

Psalms deals with a number of recurring themes. Many of its chapters contain prayers and supplications that seem to correspond to actual events in the life of King David. But despite their various allusions to historical events, the psalms are not autobiographical. While many of them are attributed to David, neither his private nor his public persona is readily discernible. What emerges from most of the psalms is not the voice of a specific historical figure but rather that of Everyman.

As the bounds of the personal are transcended, the psalms enter the realm of the universal. For instance, from the standpoint of history, we know that King David was surrounded for most of his life by followers, friends, and admirers. Yet what is most striking in the psalms of supplication attributed to David is the loneliness they convey. Only rarely do we get a sense of David as part of a larger “us,” for better or for worse. The image is that of a man who feels alone even in the midst of a crowd. This quality, somewhat paradoxically, makes Psalms not only a collection of songs that can be sung aloud in a chorus of voices, but also an expression of many people’s most private life experiences, whether joyous or distressing. As the verse says, “The heart alone knows its own bitterness, and no stranger can share in its joy” (Proverbs 14:10). People first feel their own pain and happiness, and only after that can they identify with the feelings and experiences of others.

The logic behind the psalms’ arrangement remains unclear. There are no obvious differences between the five books, or sections, of Psalms. And while here and there a group of psalms appears to have certain structural or thematic similarities, these are the exceptions to the rule. It appears likely that the disarray is intentional, reflecting the perspective of a work that above all expresses human emotions. For emotions, like existence itself, have no fixed order; there are no predetermined conditions governing a person’s feeling happy, sorrowful, introspective, or grateful. Psalms mirrors life in all its vicissitudes and inconsistencies, demonstrating that despite our most strenuous efforts, life can never be fully organized or controlled.

The chapters of Psalms differ from one another in structure and style as well as content and length. Psalms contains the shortest chapter in the Bible

(two verses) and almost immediately following it, the longest chapter (176 verses). Some of the psalms have the rhythm and tone of epic poetry. Some are simple entreaties, and others are an outpouring of feeling emanating from the depths of the soul. There are many tearful prayers in Psalms, and often no explanation is provided for the psalmist's distress other than that something is wrong. Some psalms are distinctly meditative and deal with a well-defined topic. Others are songs of a historical nature. Also quite a few psalms offer straightforward, moral instruction.

Despite all the differences between them, the psalms share one outstanding characteristic: truth. There is no smoothing of rough edges, no attempt to ignore or gloss over difficult issues in order to create a sense of harmony. Indeed, many of the psalms have a kind of built-in dissonance that results from the psalmist's refusal to relinquish a point of truth even at the expense of disrupting the overall melody. Undoubtedly, this aspect of Psalms is partially why it continues to speak to so many people in all corners of the world. While Psalms very much belongs to a specific place (the Land of Israel) and a specific period (the biblical era), it nonetheless transcends all boundaries of space and time.

Essentially, rather than being a book of poetry expressing the "I" of the poet, Psalms is a book of prayer. To the extent that "I" is present in each psalm, so, too, God is always present as the divine "You." This is the case both when every verse of a given psalm contains some reference to the divine, and when heavenly matters go almost or entirely unmentioned. What we have here, as the psalmist himself notes, is a kind of conversation, or pouring forth of the soul, "before the Lord" (Psalms 102:1). The spiritual world presented in Psalms is neither mysterious nor complicated. Although some of the psalms sound a note of complaint, there is always a sense that here, unlike in other books of the Bible such as Job or Ecclesiastes, these emotions are kept firmly in check. Moreover, even when they raise questions that are essentially unanswerable, the psalms remain a form of prayer.

Like Job and Ecclesiastes, Psalms has a special, unique set of cantillations. The cantillation signs serve to punctuate the verses as well as to indicate specific musical notes. In Psalms, the musical component of the cantillations has been entirely lost. We know that certain psalms were sung in the Temple during the era of the Second Temple and possibly even before that. But beyond this we lack any reliable tradition pertaining to the melodies that were sung.

Until the period of the Sages, Psalms consisted of 147 chapters. Most of these texts have a heading and a clear internal structure. A later, non-Jewish

division of Psalms produced the current 150 chapters, a few of which appear to be incomplete or not self-contained. Most of the psalms are attributed to David, as indicated in the psalms themselves, using descriptions such as: “the prayers of David son of Yishai” (Psalms 72:20). Nevertheless, according to the Sages (*Bava Batra* 14b–15a) various psalms were authored by ten others, among them Adam and Moses.

Apart from its literary value, Psalms enjoys an exceptional status in the biblical canon. No book of the Bible has evoked more tears or more words of gratitude and joy. Over the course of Jewish history, Psalms has been utilized more than any other book, not just by poets, but by all who seek to articulate the appropriate words and phrases with which to beseech, express gratitude to, pour out the sorrows of their soul to, or simply have a conversation with God. Whether it is a lonely widow weeping over her travails, a leader grappling with a military or political crisis, or an individual inspired to sing a song of thanksgiving, Psalms provides a mouthpiece for everyone. Indeed, if King David is termed “the sweet singer of Israel” (II Samuel 23:1), it is because he sang the song of an entire people.

Last, in places the book of Psalms contains sparks of mystical inspiration. These are embedded within the text and can be understood as simply poetic expressions of spirituality that are never fully articulated. This, too, accounts for part of the potent appeal of Psalms: Despite the gamut of human experience and emotions it conveys, its underlying melody is never extreme. Penetrating questions, existential doubts, unbearable pain, and unbridled joy as well are all hinted at, but never fully explicated. It is as if, alongside each psalm, the psalmist has left a blank sheet for every reader to inscribe his own poetry.

Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz

## *Introduction by the Hebrew Editors*

The purpose of this commentary is to assist the contemporary reader by bridging the gaps in language, outlook, and culture between us and the world of Psalms. As far as possible, it seeks to clarify ambiguities, elucidate problematic passages, and remove obstacles to understanding while dealing with both explicit and implicit difficulties.

The commentary consists of several parts, which complement but are independent of one another. The literal translation of the verses appears in boldface. Woven into the biblical text in non-bold typeface are brief explanatory comments and elaborations.

The commentary seeks to concisely clarify the language and context at the most basic level, so as not to encumber the reader. Consequently, it is not committed to a particular exegetical method and does not systematically defer to any particular commentator.

Much thought and labor has been invested to ensure that the design of this work is as aesthetically pleasing and convenient for the user as possible. This design is the fruit of an ongoing collaboration between the team at the Institute for Talmudic Publications and Koren Publishers. Our thanks to Rabbi Meir Hanegbi whose wisdom, conviviality, and efficiency contributed greatly to the success of the project. Rabbi Hanokh Ben Arza, may his memory be for a blessing, was the father of the two editors in chief of the Hebrew edition; his spirit and respect for the written word inspired them in their work.

The Editors

## *Introduction by the Translators*

The English translation of the Steinsaltz Tehillim includes a completely new translation of Psalms based on Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz's Hebrew commentary. Translation is necessarily an act of interpretation. We have done our best, at Rabbi Steinsaltz's behest, to stay as close as possible to the original Hebrew verses so that the English reader will encounter the complexities of the text directly. Our goal throughout has been to produce a translation that is true to the original Hebrew text and commentary, yet at the same time is readable and accessible to a broad range of readers, from those who are familiar with Hebrew to those for whom the English translation is the only means by which they will gain access to the text. In the spirit of the Hebrew edition, we have sought to preserve the lofty register of the biblical text while providing a commentary that is relevant and inspiring to our own generation. We hope that the Author of the Torah has aided us in achieving this goal.

We thank Matthew Miller, Avishai Magence, and the devoted and gifted team at Koren Publishers. Special thanks to Gaya Aranoff Bernstein for contributing her insights and knowledge, which greatly enhanced the readability of the text. We are grateful to Rabbi Meni Even-Israel, Executive Director of the Steinsaltz Center, whose wisdom and guidance have made the publication of this Psalms possible.

On behalf of the team of inspired and dedicated translators, editors, and copy editors with whom it has been a great privilege to work, I express my hope that the decisions we have made have produced a translation that is faithful to the Hebrew, readable, accessible, and useful to the reader.

Jason Rappoport  
Editor in Chief

תהילים



PSALMS

## Prayer before the Reading of Psalms

יְהוָה יִרְצֶנּוּ! May it be Your will, Lord our God, God of our ancestors, who chooses His servant David and his descendants after him, who chooses song and praise, that You turn, in Your compassion, toward my reading of these Psalms, as if King David, peace be upon him, were reading them himself. And may the merit of the verses of the Psalms, the merit of their words and letters, their vowels and their notes, and of the names found in them, formed of the first letters and last letters of their words, all stand up for us, to bring us atonement for our rebellions and transgressions and sins; to cut down tyrants, to harvest all the thorns and thistles surrounding the heavenly lily, and to join the Bride of His youth with the Beloved, in friendship and in brotherhood and love. And from that place may plenty be drawn down to us, to soul and spirit and higher soul, to purify us of our iniquities and to forgive our sins and atone our transgressions, just as You forgave David, who first spoke these songs before You, as it is said: “The Lord has expunged even your sin; you will not die.” And do not *II Sam. 12:13* take us from this world before our time, not before our seventy years are complete; let us live such that we may be able to put right all that we have damaged. And may the merit of King David, peace be upon him, defend us, that You may withhold Your wrath until we return to You in complete repentance. Grace us with gifts undeserved from Your treasury, as it is said, “I will favor whom I will favor, and I will have mercy on whom I will *Ex. 33:19* have mercy.” And just as we sing songs in this world, so may we have the merit to sing before You, Lord our God, God of our ancestors, song and praise in the World to Come. And through our speaking these Psalms, may the Rose of Sharon be awakened to sing with a lovely voice, rejoicing, and song, for the glory of Lebanon is given to her. *Is. 35:2* Glory and splendor in the House of our God, speedily in our days. Amen, Selah!

Before reading Psalms it is customary to recite these verses:

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us make a joyful sound to the rock *Ps. 95:1–3* of our salvation. Let us greet Him with thanksgiving; let us cry out to Him joyfully, with song. For the Lord is a great God, a great King above all gods.



## תפילה לפני אמירת תהלים

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, הַבּוֹחֵר בְּדָוִד עַבְדּוֹ וּבְזָרְעוֹ  
 אַחֲרָיו, וְהַבּוֹחֵר בְּשִׁירוֹת וּתְשׁוּבָחוֹת, שֶׁתִּפְּנֶן בְּרַחֲמִים אֶל קְרִיאַת מְזֻמְרֵי  
 תְּהִלִּים שֶׁאֶקְרָא בְּאֵלֹי אֲמָרֵם דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם בְּעֶצְמוֹ, זְכוּתוֹ  
 תִּגַּן עָלֵינוּ, וְיַעֲמֹד לָנוּ זְכוּת פְּסוּקֵי תְהִלִּים וְזְכוּת תְּבוּתֵיהֶם וְאוֹתִיוֹתֵיהֶם  
 וְנִקְדוּתֵיהֶם וְטַעֲמֵיהֶם וְהַשְּׂמוֹת הַיּוֹצְאִים מֵהֶם מְרָאִשֵׁי תְבוּת וּמִסּוּפֵי  
 תְבוּת לְכַפֵּר פִּשְׁעֵינוּ וְעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְחַטָּאתֵינוּ, וּלְזַמֵּר עָרִיצִים וְלַהֲכַרִּית כָּל  
 הַחֹחִים וְהַקּוֹצִים הַסּוֹבְבִים אֶת הַשָּׁשְׁנָה הָעֲלִיוֹנָה וּלְחַבֵּר אֶשֶׁת נְעוּרִים  
 עִם דּוֹדָהּ בְּאַהֲבָה וְאַחוּהָ וְרַעוּת, וּמִשֵּׁם יִמְשַׁךְ לָנוּ שִׁפְעַת לִנְפֶשׁ רוּחַ וּנְשֻׁמָּה  
 לְטַהֲרֵנוּ מִעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וּלְסַלֵּחַ חַטָּאתֵינוּ וּלְכַפֵּר פִּשְׁעֵינוּ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁסֻּלַּחַת לְדָוִד  
 שֶׁאָמַר מְזֻמְרִים אֵלָיו לְפָנֶיךָ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, גַּם־יְהוָה הֶעֱבִיר חַטָּאתְךָ לֹא  
 תָמוּת: וְאֵל תִּקְחֵנוּ מִהָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה קֹדֶם זְמַנְנוּ עַד מְלֵאת שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָהֶם  
 שְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה, בְּאוֹפֵן שְׁנוֹכַל לְתַקֵּן אֶת אֲשֶׁר שִׁחַתְנוּ, וְזְכוּת דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם תִּגַּן עָלֵינוּ וּבַעֲדָנוּ, שֶׁתֹּאדִיר אֶפְךָ עַד שׁוּבְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּתִשׁוּבָה  
 שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ, וּמֵאוֹצַר מִתְּנַת חַנּוּם חַנּוּנוֹ, כְּדַכְּתִיב, וְחִנֵּיתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֶחָן  
 וְרַחֲמֵתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֶרְחַם: וּכְשֵׁם שֶׁאֲנִי אוֹמְרִים לְפָנֶיךָ שִׁירָה בְּעוֹלָם  
 הַזֶּה, כִּךָ נִזְכָּר לִזְמַר לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ שִׁיר וּשְׁבַחָה לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וְעַל  
 יְדֵי אֲמִירַת תְּהִלִּים, תִּתְעוֹרֵר חֲבַצְלַת הַשְּׂרוּן וְלִשִׁיר בְּקוֹל נְעִים בְּגִילַת  
 וְרִנָּן, כְּבוֹד הַלְּבָנוֹן נִתְּן־לָהּ: הוֹד וְהָדָר בְּבֵית אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ,  
 אָמֵן סְלָה.

שמואל ב' יב:ג

שמות לג:ט

ישעיה לה:ב

Before reading Psalms it is customary to recite these verses:

לְכוּ נִרְנְנָה לַיהוָה, נְרִיעָה לְצוֹר יִשְׁעֵנוּ:  
 נִקְדְּמָה פָּנֵינוּ בְּתוֹדָהּ, בְּזִמְרוֹת נְרִיעַ לוֹ:  
 כִּי אֵל גָּדוֹל יְהוָה, וּמֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים:

תהלים צה:א-ג

## BOOK ONE

## SUNDAY

## PSALM 1

A psalm that offers general observations on the joy of an individual who conducts his life in the proper manner, in contrast to the lives of those who are evil and sinful.

א לחודש

1st day  
of month

אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא  
הִלֵּךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבַדְרֹךְ  
חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבְמוֹשָׁב  
לְצִיִּים לֹא יֹשֵׁב:

1 Happy is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the wicked, has not stood in the path of sinners, and has not sat in the company of scoffers

כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חָפְצוֹ  
וּבַתּוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵה:

2 but whose desire is the Torah of the Lord; he meditates on His Torah day and night.

## PSALM 1

- 1 **Happy is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the wicked, has not stood in the path of sinners.** A person who shuns evil leads a fortunate, happy life. The simplest definition of the word *ashrei*, which is found mainly in Psalms, is “happy,” but *ashrei* also connotes the right path, the correct way, that which is true and good. This definition complements the first in that happiness ensues when a person leads his life in the proper manner. Thus, *ashrei* expresses both the subjective, emotional component of good or happiness as well as the objective good of choosing the righteous and honest path. The phrase *atzat resha'im*, “counsel of the wicked,” refers to bad advice given by wicked people. The happy man described here has not accepted or followed that advice. Since in other places the word *atzat* can be defined as “company” as well as “counsel,” this verse can also be interpreted to mean that a good man does not associate with wicked people, refusing to be considered part of their society. **And has not sat in the company of scoffers.** In modern Hebrew, *letzim*, translated here as “scoffers,” are clowns or jokers. But in Psalms, as in Proverbs and other sources, the word has a darker, more pejorative meaning. Scoffers are characterized by their frivolity and lightheartedness toward that which is good. Even if they have no evil intent and do not actually behave in an evil manner, their mode of thinking and speaking opens the door to all manner of forbidden actions. The phrase “has not sat in the company of scoffers” emphasizes that even if someone is not an active participant in such a group, even if he merely sits among them, he is exposing himself to wrongdoing.
- 2 **But whose desire is the Torah of the Lord.** God’s Torah is a guidebook for a way of life, and he, the good and happy person, desires God’s Torah. **He meditates on His Torah day and night.**

וְהִיא כְּעֵץ שֶׁתּוֹלַעַל-פְּלִיגִי א  
 מִיָּם אֲשֶׁר פָּרִיו | יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ  
 וְעֵלְהוּ לֹא-יִבּוֹל וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-  
 יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ:

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which brings forth its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither; whatever he does will prosper.

לֹא-כֵן הָרָשָׁעִים כִּי אִם-כְּפִמּוֹץ א  
 אֲשֶׁר-תִּדְפְּנוּ רוּחַ:

4 Not so the wicked, who are like chaff that wind blows away.

עַל-כֵּן | לֹא-יִקְמוּ רָשָׁעִים א  
 בְּמִשְׁפַּט וְחַטָּאִים בְּעֵדוּת  
 צְדִיקִים:

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand up in judgment, nor evildoers among the righteous.

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The pronoun “His” can be said to be referring to the person studying the Torah rather than to God. This phrase, then, emphasizes each specific individual’s understanding of Torah, what he knows of it in his mind and heart. The term *yehgeh*, translated here as “meditates,” can also mean “utters.” In a way, this psalm provides a definition of a righteous person. Such a person’s innermost desire is for Torah, not only in the intellectual sense, but intuitively and spiritually as well. His thoughts and speech consist of Torah even when he has no particular task, be it religious or mundane, to undertake at the time. In choosing to spend all his time thinking and speaking of God’s Torah, he distances himself from evil and clings to good, and for this he is rewarded as described in the following verse.

3 **He is like a tree planted by streams of water.** The tree described here lacks nothing. Even without rain, it has sufficient water. It is a tree **which brings forth its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.** Trees that lack water often bear their fruit late, and their leaves shrivel and fall, but this tree is eternally fresh and thriving. This image is not merely one of blessing but also a concrete promise of ongoing fruitfulness in all its manifestations. The fruit of the righteous person’s Torah, as well as that of his everyday labors, will ripen at the right time, bringing benefit both to himself and to others. He will not suffer from premature decline or withering, and **whatever he does will prosper.**

4 By contrast, **not so the wicked, who** are not at all like well-rooted trees but instead **are like chaff that wind blows away.** Chaff is incapable of growth and, lacking a secure place of its own, is scattered by the wind in all directions. The wicked have a similar fate. They have no real place, no plan, but simply conform to shifting influences.

5 **Therefore the wicked will not stand up in judgment.** When the time of judgment comes, the wicked will have no standing, **nor evildoers among the righteous.** Not only will evildoers not be acquitted, but they will not even be able to join the company of the righteous.

- כִּי־יֹדַע יְהוָה דְרֹךְ צְדִיקִים <sup>1</sup> <sup>6</sup> For the Lord knows the way of  
וְדֹךְ רְשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד׃ the righteous, but the way of  
the wicked will perish.

## PSALM 2

A psalm without a heading in honor of a king who is mentioned several times. From its content and visionary language, it appears that the psalm is not describing a specific king but rather a prophetic vision of the future redeemer, the Messiah.

- לָמָּה רָגְשׁוּ גוֹיִם וְלֵאמֹנִים <sup>א</sup> <sup>1</sup> Why do nations rage and  
יְהִגְדִיק׃ peoples meditate in vain?
- יִתְיַצְּבוּ מְלִכֵי־אָרֶץ וְרוֹזְנִים <sup>ב</sup> <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth have  
נֹסְדוּ־יַחַד עַל־יְהוָה וְעַל־ assembled, and rulers are  
מְשִׁיחוֹ׃ gathered together against  
the Lord and against His  
anointed one:
- נִגְתְּקָה אֶת־מוֹסְרוֹתֵינוּ <sup>ג</sup> <sup>3</sup> Let us snap off their chains and  
וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבֹתֵינוּ׃ throw off their bonds.

- <sup>6</sup> **For the Lord knows the way of the righteous.** Here, as elsewhere, *yode'a*, translated here as “knows,” specifically implies connectedness and love. God loves the righteous, and He therefore guides and assists them on their journey through life. **But** by contrast, **the way of the wicked will perish.** The way of the wicked results not only in the loss of eternal existence but also in an inability to withstand the vicissitudes of life. Their path inevitably ends in ruin.

### PSALM 2

- <sup>1</sup> **Why do nations rage** and stir up a great commotion, **and peoples meditate in vain?** Why do they deliberate and make declarations that, in the end, are no more than empty threats?
- <sup>2</sup> **The kings of the earth have assembled, and rulers are gathered together against the Lord and against His anointed one.** Those in power consult with one another, gathering together in order to plot against God and His anointed one, as described in the following verse:
- <sup>3</sup> **Let us snap off their chains,** a metaphor for the rule and control that Israel exerts over them,

- יוֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק אֲדֹנָי  
 יִלְעַג לָמוֹ:
- אִזּוּ יְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים בְּאַפּוֹ  
 וּבַחֲרוֹנוֹ יִבְהַלְמוּ:
- וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מִלְּפָנֵי עַל-צִיּוֹן  
 הַר-קֹדֶשׁ:
- אֲסַפֵּר אֶל חֵק יְהוָה אֲמַר  
 אֱלֹהִים בְּנִי-אַתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם  
 יִלְדֶּתְךָ:
- שְׂאֵל מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶתְנֶנָּה גֹיִם  
 נַחֲלֶתְךָ וְאַחֲזֶתְךָ אֶפְסֵי-  
 אֲרֶץ:
- 4 He whose seat is in heaven  
 will laugh; the Lord will  
 ridicule them.
- 5 Then He will talk to them in  
 His anger; in His wrath He will  
 frighten them:
- 6 Yet I have anointed My king on  
 Zion, My holy mountain.
- 7 I will tell of the decree. The  
 Lord said to me: You are My  
 son; today I begat you.
- 8 Make your request of Me,  
 and I will make nations your  
 inheritance; the ends of earth  
 will be your portion.

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**and throw off their bonds.** The main objective of their rebellion against the king is to be free of God, as the king represents the nation's connection to God.

4 **He whose seat is in heaven will laugh; the Lord will ridicule them.** All those rulers' plans will come to naught, for they are void of any true substance. What actually will come to pass is punishment from on high.

5 **Then He will talk to them in His anger; in His wrath He will frighten them:**

6 **Yet I have anointed My king on Zion, My holy mountain.** The continuation of the psalm is spoken by the king himself:

7 **I will tell of the decree.** I will set forth the basic premise of all my actions. **The Lord said to me: You are My son; today I begat you.** The king can be likened to God's beloved son. When he ascends to the throne, it is as if he is being reborn.

8 God has told me: **Make your request of Me,** God has told me, **and I will make nations your inheritance; the ends of earth will be your portion.** You will reign over many nations; your sovereignty will extend to the ends of the earth.

- ט תִּרְעֵם בְּשֵׁבֶט בְּרִזְל כְּכֹלִי  
 יוֹצֵר תִּנְפְּצֵם:
- י וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים הִשְׁפִּילוּ  
 הוֹסְרוּ שִׁפְטֵי אָרֶץ:
- יא עֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בִּירְאָה וְגִילוּ  
 בְּרַעְדָּה:
- יב נִשְׁקוּ־בַר פֶּן־יִאַנֶּף וְתִאָּבְדוּ  
 דֶּרֶךְ כִּי־יִבְעַר כְּמַעַט אַפּוֹ  
 אֲשֵׁרֵי כָל־חוֹסֵי בּוֹ:
- 9 You will smash them with an iron rod, shatter them like a potter's vessel.
- 10 So now, kings, be wise; accept admonishment, judges of the earth.
- 11 Serve the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the son, lest He be angry and you lose your way, even if His anger burns only slightly. Happy are all who rely on Him.

- 9 **You will smash them with an iron rod, shatter them like a potter's vessel.** You will destroy all your enemies as easily as one shatters a clay vessel.
- 10 **So now, kings, be wise; accept admonishment, judges of the earth.** Understand that God has placed the privilege of sovereignty in my hands, and that is why you are powerless against me. For this reason, one should follow the piece of advice given in the next verse:
- 11 **Serve the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling.** Although you will be able to rejoice under the rule of the king, this joy must be tempered with a trembling awe as a hidden threat will always be present: If you do not serve God, you will be punished in various and sundry ways.
- 12 **Kiss the son.** Most commentators define *bar* here as "son," which is the meaning of this word in Aramaic, referring to the king to whom God referred when He said: "You are My son" (verse 7). The kiss is an expression of homage and affection. **Lest He be angry and you lose your way, even if His anger burns only slightly.** You cannot withstand God's fury; you cannot weather even His slightest anger. By contrast, **happy are all who rely on Him.** Those who put their faith in God will find the world both beautiful and full of goodness.

## PSALM 3

A psalm referring to an episode in which David is surrounded by enemies and considered by everyone to be in a hopeless situation. Notwithstanding, he trusts in God to deliver him from his enemies and lead him to victory and peace.

- אֶבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ: מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּבִרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֵין
- א 1 A psalm by David when he fled from Avshalom his son.
- יְהוָה מְהֵרָבּוּ צָרֵי רַבִּים קָמִים עָלַי: ב
- ב 2 Lord, how numerous are my tormentors; many rise up against me.
- רַבִּים אֹמְרִים לִנְפְשִׁי אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לֹא בֵאלֹהִים סֵלָה: ג
- ג 3 Many say of me: There is no salvation for him in God, Selah.
- וְאַתָּה יְהוָה מָגֵן בְּעַדִּי כְבוֹדִי וּמְרִים רֵאשִׁי: ד
- ד 4 But You, Lord, protect me. You are my glory; You lift my head.

## PSALM 3

- 1 **A psalm by David when he fled from Avshalom his son.** Although this heading makes reference to a specific episode, the psalm speaks generally of a situation of great distress. It is an entreaty to God, coupled with an expression of faith that He will rescue the psalmist from his dire straits.
- 2 **Lord, how numerous are my tormentors; many rise up against me.** Not only are they enemies, but they are rebels from within my own ranks.
- 3 In addition to these enemies and rebels, principally Avshalom's army, there are **many** others who **say of me: There is no salvation for him in God.** Although they were not actively involved in the insurgency, there were those who nonetheless believed that David's reign had ended and his predicament was hopeless. **Selah.** The meaning of the word "Selah," which is found almost exclusively in Psalms, is not entirely clear. According to ancient tradition, the word means "forever, eternally." Though this definition is often acceptable, it sometimes seems forced. There are those who interpret it to be a confirmation of the preceding phrase, akin to "indeed" or "it is so." Others believe the term is a musical notation signifying a type of crescendo, as if to indicate that the volume should be increased. Finally, some commentators are convinced that it is an instruction to prolong the recitation of the preceding word in order to maintain the cadence of the psalm.
- 4 **But You, Lord, protect me. You are my glory,** or, alternatively, You are the source of my glory, and **You lift my head.** You keep me from being completely cast off and humiliated.



- קוֹלִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲנֵנִי  
 מִהַר קִדְשׁוֹ סֵלָה׃  
 אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִישְׁנָה  
 הִקְיִצְוֹתַי כִּי יְהוָה יִסְמְכֵנִי׃  
 לֹא־אִירָא מִרַבְּבוֹת עַם  
 אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שָׁתוּ עָלַי׃  
 קוּמָה יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי  
 כִּי־הִפִּיתָ אֶת־כָּל־אֹיְבֵי לְחֵי  
 שִׁנֵּי רְשָׁעִים שִׁבַּרְתָּ׃  
 לִיהוָה הִישׁוּעָה עַל־עַמְּךָ  
 בְּרַכְתֶּךָ סֵלָה׃
- 5 I cried aloud to the Lord and He answered me from His holy mount, Selah.  
 6 I lay down and slept; I awoke because the Lord sustains me.  
 7 I shall have no fear of the myriads that surround me and oppose me.  
 8 Arise, Lord; save me, my God. For You have smitten my enemies on the cheek; You have broken the teeth of the wicked.  
 9 Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is on Your people, Selah.

- 5 **I cried aloud to the Lord and He answered me from His holy mount, Selah.** It is as if I can hear the voice of God speaking to me from the holy mount in Jerusalem.
- 6 **I lay down and slept**, often dejected and with no expectation that I would live to see the following day. But **I awoke**, I did not succumb to eternal sleep, **because the Lord sustains me** and has given me the strength to carry on.
- 7 And because God sustains me, **I shall have no fear of the myriads that surround me and oppose me.** I am not afraid of tens of thousands of people, all of whom are poised to attack me.
- 8 **Arise, Lord.** This is a call for God to reveal Himself in a recognizable way. **Save me, my God. For You have smitten my enemies on the cheek.** You have slapped the faces of all the enemies who surround me. This notion of a painful blow to the enemy's cheek resonates with the succeeding imagery: **You have broken the teeth of the wicked.**
- 9 In summation, David declares: **Salvation belongs to the Lord.** Even if salvation from God does not appear to be imminent, eventually it becomes apparent that **Your blessing is on Your people, Selah.**



## PSALM 4

A psalm of entreaty on the part of one who is being vilified and pursued for no good reason. The psalmist calls upon God, as He both saves the blameless and foils the schemes of the wicked.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>לְמִנְצַחַת בְּנִגִּינֹת מִזְמוֹר<br/>לְדָוִד:</p> <p>בְּקִרְאֵי עֲנֵנִי וְאֱלֹהֵי צְדָקָי<br/>בְּצָר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִּי חֲזָנִי וּשְׁמַע<br/>תַּפְלֹתַי:</p> | <p><sup>א</sup> 1 For the chief musician, on<br/>stringed instruments, a psalm<br/>by David.</p> <p><sup>ב</sup> 2 When I call, answer me, God<br/>of my righteousness. In my<br/>distress, You have relieved me;<br/>be gracious to me and hear<br/>my prayer.</p> |
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## PSALM 4

- <sup>1</sup> **For the chief musician, on stringed instruments.** This heading indicates that the psalm is addressed to the person who conducts its musical recital, known as the *menatze'ah* or “chief musician.” This is one of a number of instructive openings to individual psalms. Some mention the type of musical instruments to be used, whereas others refer to a specific ancient melody. In this psalm, *binginot*, translated here as “on stringed instruments,” literally, “in melodies,” is interpreted by some commentators to mean that the psalm consists of two melodies. Alternatively, several instruments may have been needed to perform this song. Even the word *mizmor*, translated here as “psalm,” apparently serves to identify a particular type of melody. **A psalm by David.** Like the preceding psalm, this is essentially a prayer, though it does not speak of a specific struggle or imminent danger, but rather conveys a more generalized state of distress. It also includes expressions of encouragement for others.
- <sup>2</sup> **When I call, answer me, God of my righteousness. In my distress,** I feel as though I am confined. The word *batzar*, translated here as “distress,” literally means “in a narrow place.” This implies a feeling of paralysis, that my very existence, whether physical or spiritual, is so pressured that I am unable to even move. **You have relieved me.** The word *hirhavta*, “you have relieved,” literally “you have widened,” describes the feeling of relief that comes when redemption follows profound distress; it is as if all the sources of pressure have receded into the background and one can once again breathe and move freely. Now, God, **be gracious to me and hear my prayer.**

- בְּיַיִשׁ עַד־מָה כְּבוֹדִי  
לְכַלְמָה תִּאְהַבּוּן רִיק  
תִּבְקְשׁוּ כְזָב סֵלָה:
- וְדַעוּ כִּי־הִפְלִיחַ יְהוָה חֲסִיד  
לֹא יְהוָה יִשְׁמַע בְּקִרְאֵי אֱלֹוִי:  
רִגְזוּ וְאַל־תִּחַטְּאוּ אִמְרוּ  
בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל־מִשְׁפַּבְּכֶם  
וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה:
- <sup>3</sup> Sons of man, how long will you put my honor to shame, love emptiness, seek deception? Selah.
- <sup>4</sup> Know that the Lord has set apart the devoted for Himself; the Lord hears when I call to Him.
- <sup>5</sup> Tremble and do not sin; say in your heart, upon your bed, and be still, Selah.

- <sup>3</sup> **Sons of man.** The psalmist now turns to *benei ish*, “sons of man,” namely, the leaders among his adversaries. Throughout the Bible, the word *ish* usually indicates a person of seniority and status. **How long will you put my honor to shame?** How long, or to what extent, will you continue to denigrate and embarrass me? How long will you **love emptiness?** David’s humiliation and the enemies’ fight against him are not a consequence of his own deficiencies or mistakes. It is an unfounded war brought about by people who are propagating empty distortions and disseminating lies. How long will you **seek deception?** They go out of their way to seek out lies and deceptions concerning me. **Selah.**
- <sup>4</sup> Rather than pursuing me for baseless deceptive reasons, **know**, be aware, **that the Lord has set apart the devoted for Himself; the Lord hears when I call to Him.** God has a special relationship with those who are faithful to Him. David’s devotion to God and desire to be close to Him were acknowledged by all, even during his lifetime. He repeatedly refers to the special way in which God “sets apart” those who seek Him.
- <sup>5</sup> **Tremble and do not sin.** In this psalm, the word *rigzu*, defined here as “tremble,” connotes agitation, though elsewhere the word refers to anger. The psalmist bids his antagonists to shake off their evil ways. **Say in your heart, upon your bed.** He calls on people to bestir themselves, to change their mind-set, and to transform their outlook on life so that they will not be drawn toward habitual sin. It is as if the psalmist is saying: Consider these matters in private, at a time before bed rather than in the company of other people. While public discussion can lead to distorted thought and convoluted expression, private contemplation facilitates a clearer understanding of the truth. **And be still, Selah.** The psalmist further enjoins individuals to be still, to remain silent. One should not give opinions or be drawn into discussion about matters unrelated to himself or outside the realm of his understanding. In the specific case at hand, rather than focusing on David and his deficiencies, people would be better off examining their own behavior and turning toward God.

- זָבַחוּ זְבַח־יְצִדִּיק וּבְטַחוּ אֶל־  
יְהוָה:
- רַבִּים אָמְרִים מִי־יִרְאֶנּוּ טוֹב  
נְסֵה־עֲלֵינוּ אֹר פְּנֶיךָ יְהוָה:
- נִתְתָּה שְׂמֵחָה בְּלִבִּי מֵעַתָּה  
דָּגַנְּךָ וְתִירוֹשֶׁךָ רַבּוּ:
- בְּשָׁלוֹם יִחַדּוּ אֲשֻׁכְבָה וְאִישׁוֹן  
כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבַדְּךָ לְבָטַח  
תִּוְשִׁיבֵנִי:
- 6 Offer sacrifices of righteousness,  
and trust in the Lord.
- 7 Many are saying: Who will  
show us any good? Bring forth  
the light of Your countenance  
upon us, Lord.
- 8 You put gladness in my heart,  
more than when their grain  
and new wine abounded.
- 9 I lie down and sleep, at peace  
together, for You alone, Lord,  
allow me to dwell in safety.

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6 **Offer sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in the Lord.**

7 **Many are saying** in their prayers: **Who will show us any good?** They seek out a source of blessing and goodness. **Bring forth the light of Your countenance upon us, Lord.** They ask God to bring forth His light and shine His countenance upon them. Alternatively, the word *nesa*, can mean “reveal Yourself.” The psalmist goes on to say: I myself do not sit and contemplate the wrongs of others. I truly attempt to cleave to God.

8 **You put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and new wine abounded.** You, God, have brought joy to my heart, a joy greater than that felt by others in possession of abundant grain and wine. I am not jealous of them. My inner joy suffices; it even increases in the face of the great success of others.

9 **I lie down and sleep, at peace together.** The apparent meaning of this expression is that when everything all together is peaceful I will be able to sleep undisturbed. **For You alone, Lord,** even if You are alone in seeking peace for me while all others are against me, this is sufficient for me, for You will **allow me to dwell in safety.**

## PSALM 5

A psalm of prayer directed against those wicked individuals who are unworthy of God's kindness. The psalmist prays for his own righteousness to become apparent, and for him and those who are found worthy to be granted salvation.

- לְמַנְצַח אֶל־הַנְּחִילוֹת מִזְמוֹר  
לְדָוִד:<sup>א</sup>
- אֲמַרְי הַאֲזִינָה | יְהוָה בֵּינָה  
הִגִּינִי:<sup>ב</sup>
- הַקְשִׁיבָה | לְקוֹל שׁוֹעֵי מַלְכִי  
וְאֱלֹהֵי בֵי־אֵלַיִךְ אֶתְפַּלֵּל:<sup>ג</sup>
- יְהוָה בִּקְרָךְ תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי בִּקְרָךְ  
אֶעֱרֹךְ־לְךָ וְאֶצְפָּה:<sup>ד</sup>
- 1 For the chief musician, for *nehilot* accompaniment, a psalm by David.
- 2 Give ear to my words, Lord; consider my meditation.
- 3 Listen to the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for to You I pray.
- 4 In the morning, Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I direct my prayer to You and await Your response.

## PSALM 5

- 1 **For the chief musician, for *nehilot* accompaniment, a psalm by David.** We do not know exactly what the meaning of *nehilot* is, but it is reasonable to assume that it was a musical instrument used to accompany this psalm. Some commentators say that it made a buzzing sound like that of a swarm [*nehil*] of bees. Others believe it refers to an ancient melody known as *El HaNehilot* to which the words of this psalm were sung. Like the preceding psalms, this takes the form of a prayer, though it does not specify the psalmist's troubles. Instead, the psalmist contends with the various ways in which people go astray, reiterating for himself, as well as for others, the importance of desiring to be close to God and choosing the right path.
- 2 **Give ear to my words, Lord; consider my meditation.** Please listen, God, to prayers of the heart as well as to those uttered by one's lips.
- 3 **Listen to the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for to You I pray.** The emphasis here is on "to You": I pray only to You, not to others.
- 4 **In the morning, each morning, day after day, Lord, You hear my voice. In the morning, each morning, I direct my prayer to You and await Your response.** These are the words of someone who is wholeheartedly set on choosing the right path to follow, someone who knows that the choice of any other path would defy the will of God.

ה 5 כִּי לֹא אֱלֹהִים חֵפֵץ רָשָׁע |  
 אֶתָּה לֹא יִגְרֶךָ רָע:

5 For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You.

ו 6 לֹא־יִתְיַצְּבוּ הַזֹּלְלִים לְנֶגְדְךָ |  
 עֵינֶיךָ שֹׂנְאֵת כָּל־פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן:

6 The foolish will not stand before Your eyes; You hate all evildoers.

ז 7 תִּאֲבֹד דְּבָרֵי כֹזֵב אִישׁ־דָּמִים |  
 וּמְרֻמָּה יִתְעַב | יְהוָה:

7 You destroy those who speak falsehood; the Lord abhors a man of bloodshed and deceit.

ח 8 וְאֲנִי בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ אֲבוֹא |  
 בֵּיתְךָ אֲשַׁתְּחוּהָ אֶל־הַיְכָל־  
 קֹדֶשְׁךָ בִּירְאֶתְךָ:

8 But as for me, through Your abundant kindness, I will enter Your House; I will bow to Your Holy Temple in reverence to You.

ט 9 יְהוָה | נִחַנִּי בְּצַדִּיקוֹתֶיךָ לְמַעַן |  
 הַיֵּשֶׁד שׁוֹרְרֵי הוֹשֵׁד לְפָנַי דְּרַכְךָ:

9 Lead me, Lord, in Your righteousness, against my foes. Straighten Your path before me.

5 **For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness.** God's will is opposed to evil. **No evil dwells with You.**

6 **The foolish**, those who act impulsively, lack direction, and go astray, **will not stand before Your eyes.** You do not want them near You, for **You hate all evildoers.**

7 **You destroy those who speak falsehood; the Lord abhors a man of bloodshed and deceit.**

8 **But as for me, through Your abundant kindness, I will enter Your House.** The psalmist knows full well that he is not perfect. What matters is that he is trying to choose the right path. The fact that he is allowed to enter God's House is an expression of God's kindness toward him. **I will bow to Your Holy Temple in reverence to You.**

9 **Lead me, Lord, in Your righteousness.** Place me on the right path, guide me in Your righteous ways, so that I will be able to choose the appropriate way to stand **against my foes.** When surrounded by enemies, a person does not always have the ability to know how to act. It is precisely then that he needs guidance in how to remain on the proper path. **Straighten Your path before me** so that I will be able to walk easily on the path of righteousness.

- פִּי אֵין בְּפִיהוּ נְכוּנָה קִרְבָּם  
 הָיוֹת קִבְר־פִּתּוּחַ גְּרוֹם  
 לְשׁוֹנָם יַחֲלִיקוּן׃
- הַאֲשִׁימָם ׀ אֱלֹהִים יִפְלוּ  
 מִמַּעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרַב פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם  
 הִדְיָחֵמוּ פִּי מְרוּ בְךָ׃
- וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ כָּל־חַוִּסֵי בְךָ לְעוֹלָם  
 יִרְנְנוּ וְתִסַּךְ עֲלֵימוֹ וַיַּעֲלֶצוּ  
 בְךָ אֲהַבֵי שִׁמְךָ׃
- 10 There is no truth in what they say. Their inner being is misfortune; their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongue.
- 11 Condemn them, God; let them fall by their own devices. Cast them out for their many transgressions, for they have rebelled against You.
- 12 But let all who put their trust in You rejoice; let them sing for joy forever, and You will shelter them. Those who love Your name will exult in You.

10 **There is no truth in what they say.** In contrast with the divine path mentioned in the previous verse, that of the enemies is marked by deceit. **Their inner being is misfortune.** All that is found within them is *havot*, disaster and trouble, which they plot for others. **Their throat is an open grave.** In a certain sense, their mouths are like open tombs. For one thing, they exude an inner decay; moreover, they entice and seduce others to fall within. **They deceive with their tongue.** More often than not, they make use of deceptive accusations rather than honest argumentation.

11 **Condemn them, God.** Judge them as they deserve to be judged; find them guilty. **Let them fall by their own devices.** Alternatively, let them fall away from their schemes and conspiracies. **Cast them out for their many transgressions, for they have rebelled against You,** and as such they are deserving of punishment. *Pesha*, translated here as “transgression,” indicates a sin committed deliberately.

12 The psalmist concludes on a more positive note: **But let all who put their trust in You rejoice; let them sing for joy forever, and You will shelter them. Those who love Your name will exult in You.**

כִּי־אַתָּה תְּבַרֵךְ צַדִּיק יְהוָה 13 For it is You who blesses  
 כְּצִנָּה רָצוֹן תַּעֲטֹרֵנוּ: the righteous man, Lord,  
 surrounding him with favor,  
 like a shield.

## PSALM 6

A psalm of entreaty by a man who is both ill and persecuted by his enemies, crying out to God in his suffering and asking that God have mercy on him and heed his supplications.

לְמַנְצַח בְּנַגִּינֹת עַל־ 1 For the chief musician on  
 הַשְּׁמִינִית מְזֻמֹּר לְדָוִד: stringed instruments, on the  
 יהוה אֵל־בְּאַפְךָ תִּזְכֵּינֵנִי 2 Lord, rebuke me not in Your  
 וְאַל־בְּחַמְתְּךָ תִּסְרֵנִי: anger nor chasten me in Your  
 displeasure.

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13 **For it is You who blesses the righteous man, Lord, surrounding him with favor, like a shield.** *Tzinna* evokes an image of a large shield that covers the entire body like a suit of armor. This is how God loves and is close to the righteous. The word *ratzon*, “favor,” has two interconnected meanings; one is desire, a yearning and longing for something, and the other is the satisfaction that ensues with its fulfillment. The righteous are engulfed in God’s love and in His willingness to hear and gratify their desires.

### PSALM 6

- 1 **For the chief musician on stringed instruments, on the eight-stringed harp, a psalm by David.** Most commentators believe that *sheminit* refers to a type of eight-stringed musical instrument, translated here as an eight-stringed harp. Others claim that the phrase *al hasheminit*, literally, “on the eighth,” is an instruction for this particular psalm to be sung to the last of the eight melodies typically played on the instrument.
- 2 **Lord, rebuke me not in Your anger nor chasten me in Your displeasure.** The word *tokhiheni* refers to both rebuke and physical punishment. The psalmist entreats God: Do not rebuke me by means of physical punishment; pain can sometimes be unbearable.