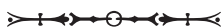


The Complete Psalms



THE BOOK OF PRAYER SONGS
IN A NEW TRANSLATION

Pamela Greenberg

Foreword by Susannah Heschel

BLOOMSBURY

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Foreword

As Pamela Greenberg writes in her introduction to this extraordinary new translation of the psalms, these are poems written not to formulate religious doctrine, but to give voice to religious emotion—all emotion, from anguish to exaltation, loneliness to thanksgiving, yearning to rage. Where our hearts go, the psalms sing with us.

Hebrew poets wrote the psalms, and their translator must be both a scholar of Hebrew and a poet herself, as is Pamela Greenberg. Her sensitivity to the nuances of the text and her commitment to creating a translation without obstacles, using inclusive language and rendering verses as questions rather than declarations, is a great gift to her readers. Her dedication is to the text but also to those thirsty for the psalms' voices. Greenberg explains: "The psalms have touched people because they reflect the lived experience of religion, not neat theological doctrine." They inspire rather than instruct, and they give voice to the deepest levels of our emotions: "We find within these verses the human search for God in all its mire and mud of complexity . . . a person yearning for revelation."

The psalms appeal to all people, regardless of religious commitments, because they strive to give voice to the human soul. Elusive and often unknowable, our souls and their passions inspire our lives and quest for religious meaning. Not under the discipline

of particular theological doctrine, the psalms are free to express the religiosity that gives rise to a wide range of religious commitments, giving them a universal relevance. People of all faiths partake of their invigorating emotional music.

Jewish life receives its flavor from the psalms. We enter, celebrate, and exit our lives in psalms. Birth, death, holidays and fast days, events of joy and sorrow are all expressed through chanting psalms. In Jewish tradition, when a child is being born, mothers and fathers recite psalms. My own mother was given general anesthesia against her will when giving birth to me, but my father spent the night pacing the floor in the hospital waiting room, trying to calm himself by chanting psalms. As a student in Jerusalem, I went to purchase matza *shmurah*, the special handmade matza, and watched as a dozen bakers rapidly mixed the special flour with drops of water, rolled out the dough, and quickly placed it, very briefly, in the hot oven, all the while singing psalms. It seemed as though not their hands but their psalms were baking the beautiful, delicate matza.

At times of fear—the illness of a loved one—or despair over death, the psalms are with us, not to offer oleaginous consolation nor to replace our emotions with calming sentiments, but to amplify and even intensify our experience. Just as the psalms sing us into birth, so do they accompany us at death; no deceased body is left alone before burial, but is washed and shrouded while psalms are constantly chanted.

What is so remarkable is the ability of the psalms to elevate us to new levels of awareness: They express in words feelings that are at times inchoate, and they allow us to speak in a voice that might otherwise seem inappropriate for a religious person—rage at our enemies, frustration when they defeat us. Those who despise us are God's enemies, the psalmist tells us (Psalm 83), surely a reassuring thought for someone who may feel isolated and deeply fearful in the face of enmity, or who may feel guilty for feelings of

anger or resentment. You are not alone, the psalmist explains, and those who despise you, who are an image of God, have become as enemies of God.

Wishes, too, find their voice—if only we could fly away from our fears and horrors, like a dove: “My heart convulses inside; / fear of death has fallen on my soul. Terror and trembling flood through me; / I am overtaken with shudders. Who will give me wings like the dove? / I would fly off and dwell someplace else.” (Psalm 55) Such words give voice to our fantasies, and grant us a sense of relief, too, in knowing that our worries are shared by others.

Is prayer for our sake alone? “Barchi nafshi et Adonai,” the opening verse of Psalm 103, speaks of our souls giving blessing to God—we pray not for our own sakes alone, but for the sake of God. Even on Yom Kippur, the Bible tells us, two goats are needed—one for Azazel, to atone for our sins, the other for God, to atone for the holy (Leviticus 16:6). Our words of worship as much as our animal sacrifices are offerings that give a “sweet smell,” pleasure and strength, to God. The beauty of the psalms as well as their passion are our gifts to God. My father, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, wrote, “The beginning of prayer is praise. The power of worship is song. To worship is to join the cosmos in praising God.”

Prayer is central to religious life, and Jewish prayer is composed not primarily of petition or requests for forgiveness, but of praise of God, as in Psalm 69:31. Prayer is an opportunity for inspiration, a reminder of what we value most highly, and for Jews, prayer begins with psalms. My father viewed prayer as a home for the soul: “To live without prayer is to live without God, to live without a soul . . . To pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments. Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living.”

The moments of greatest joy in our lives are fleeting, but when

such moments are expressed in the words of psalms they are captured and brought into memory. The psalms express outbursts of joy: “My heart will leap in joy / when you respond to my cry for salvation.” (Psalm 13); “I overflow with joy at your presence.” (Psalm 16) And God is the “Source of Joy” (Psalm 27, 34, 118), so that moments of our joy are experiences of God. We sing psalms when relieved of torment, when we gather the harvest, when we walk to the chuppah, when we celebrate those we love, when we rejoice in our accomplishments, when we pause and notice the extraordinary miracle of being alive. A psalm every day: is that not what our lives should become?

At the same time, just as prayer comes not simply as a source of comfort and reassurance, the psalms are also intended to disturb our complacency. We pray not only with our hearts and voices, but with our bodies, as the psalmist says, “All my bones will declare: / God, who compares to you, / the one who lifts away the poor / from one more powerful, / the afflicted from hands of the thief?” (Psalm 35) Our bones, our bodies also pray, in acts of kindness, certainly, but also in demonstrations against injustice; in 1965 my father, returning from the civil rights march in Selma, Alabama, said, “I felt my legs were praying.”

The passion of the psalms mirrors the passion of the prophets. Both are intended to disrupt our complacency and force us to confront the injustices of our society. From the very first psalm, the message is clear: “The wrongful will not stand in light of justice, / nor the purposeless in gathered testimony of the true of heart.” (Psalm 1) We remind ourselves that the very commitment to justice comes from God: “Awaken yourself to my cause / with the justice you commanded of us . . . Bring an end to injuries from the wrongful, / and help sustainers of justice stand upright.” (Psalm 7) Indeed, God is known through justice: “Your divinity is known by your justice.” (Psalm 9) God is sustained by justice: “Righteousness and justice uphold your holy throne.” (Psalm 97) Zion,

Isaiah declares, shall be redeemed by justice, and those who repent, by righteousness. For the psalmist no less than the prophets, justice is the tool of God, the manifestation of God, the means of our redemption, and the redemption of God from human mendacity. With her beautiful new translation of the psalms, Pamela Greenberg helps us move closer to that redemption.

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Introduction

When I embarked on translating the psalms, it was with an impulse both spiritual and literary. Like many, I turned toward them during a dark time. I had fallen into a depression that was part biological, part circumstantial. The translations were, in effect, my attempt to pray during a period when other kinds of established prayer seemed impossible. My practice was to flip through a version with short synopses until I arrived at one that spoke to me on any given day. I was new to religious life, having landed there through sheer desperation, and found within the psalms a model for talking to God. I had begun to teach myself Hebrew, and found that a dictionary helped reveal aspects of their meaning and beauty that had eluded me in the English renditions with which I was familiar.

The psalms became my companions. The voice of the psalmist crying out for God spoke to me in moments of intense despair. The outbursts of joy upon witnessing divine presence in the natural world equally echoed and evoked my wonder. And finally, the psalms spoke to me as poetry, with their mixture of parallelism and narrative, their intentionality of language and form. I was captivated by the internal dialogue and the complexity of ways that a given psalm revealed an emotion or elaborated a theme, and I had great affinity for the themes themselves. The translation began, then, as a very personal project, a labor of necessity and love.

The psalms are essentially about faith, but not as faith is often

imagined. Many of us believe it to be an achieved state, a place on a spiritual map, a glow of unwavering belief in relation to God. But such a conception bears little resemblance to the real experience of religious life, which is always a vector, a way of directing and redirecting oneself toward God in various gradations of intensity and confidence.

The psalms have touched people because they reflect the lived experience of religion, not neat theological doctrine. The psalmist does not embody a religious ideal or Kierkegaard's "man of perfect faith." Instead, we find within these verses the human search for God in all its mire and mud of complexity. Their landscape ranges from rocky crags upon which one stands in flight from persecution, to the shadow of God's wings, to rivers and oceans that threaten to drown one in churning waters of despair. Their diversity gives testimony to the life of a person reaching with full heart and intellect toward God, a person yearning for revelation amidst the spectrum of circumstances that life presents. And within that search appears everything from jubilation to hopelessness to the various emotions in between.

In this, the psalms continue to be wholly relevant to our spiritual quests today. One need not even be overtly religious to be moved by their poetry and their honest confrontation with the suffering of existence. Historically, however, their power has been diminished by an insistence on theological dogma. For many years, their intimate connection with the communal prayer life of both Judaism and Christianity was a stumbling block to translating them honestly. At least until recently, liturgy tended to emphasize visions of spiritual perfection over acknowledgment that religious struggle is a necessary aspect of religious life.

As a result, the overwhelming tendency of translators has been to downplay anger at God and reinterpret the psalms in ways that were doctrinally more palatable. They did this based partly on traditional understandings of the text. Rashi, for instance, the most

famous medieval Jewish commentator, demonstrates clear discomfort with the idea of the psalms expressing individual suffering, and tends to read many of the psalms (even ones that clearly resonate with solitary outcry) as representing the communal suffering of Israel. Early Christian commentators, on the other hand, tend to interpret the psalms as prefiguring the second coming of Christ. The King James Version has been accused of upholding the divine right of kings. Every translator has brought a theological and ideological concern to these verses.

Since all translation is part interpretation, bringing one's own ideas to the psalms is inevitable. The difficulty is that allegiance to preconceived ideas of piety has often resulted in a flattening of the richness and subtle poetry of the original. For readers of English, this has been a tragic loss. It is precisely the psalms' refusal to engage in theological piety—their overflowing into wild jubilation or anger or deeply wrenching despair—that allows them to resonate as perennial expressions of the human desire to stand simply and unabashedly before God.

My central motivation in this translation was the impulse of *shiru l'Adonai shir chadash*, the imperative to sing to God a new song. I wanted to render the original in such a way that it might be more useful and alive for liturgical and meditative reflection. In doing so, I wanted to find ways to struggle with the poetry and vibrancy of the original psalms while at the same time wrestling with them as pieces of living liturgy. Because my central aim was to bring the text more fully alive as an act of prayer, I did not limit myself to translating any given word in the same way each time it appears. While consistency of language is useful as a pedagogical drumbeat, awakening a reader to repetitions that might otherwise be lost, poetry was for me a higher imperative.

In some instances, this meant translating identical phrases differently. This is the case, for example, with Psalms 103 and 104, both of which begin with the same Hebrew phrase, *Barchi nafshi*

et Adonai. In my rendering of Psalm 103, I translate this as “Be wild, O my soul, for the Source of Wonder.” In using that language, I wanted to emphasize the utter exuberance that characterizes the rest of the psalm. In Psalm 104, I translate the same lines as “Stand in wonder, my soul, before the Eternal.” In that psalm, it is the quiet wonder at God’s everlasting presence that seemed more appropriate to reflect.

I also did not limit myself to a single translation of the various names for God, but rather arrived at translations according to the context. My choices were at times based on etymology. The word *Adonai*, for instance, comes from a root meaning “support for a pole of the tabernacle,” and so I sometimes translate it as “My Upholder,” rather than the more traditional “My Lord.” I have also chosen various expressions for the Tetragrammaton, the name for God that by Jewish tradition is unpronounceable. These include “Holy One,” “Eternal,” or “Creator,” depending on the lines that surround it. My goal was to propel the language and concepts of the psalms beyond familiar meanings and translate them in ways that are more expressive of the concepts they embody.

I also wanted to capture the multilayered texture of the Hebrew root, the fact, for instance, that a given word could hold allusions to both an abstract concept and a physical entity in the same three letter combination. Whenever possible, I opted for the corporeal over the conceptual. For example, in translating Psalm 49 I render the first line as “Listen to this all nations, bend down your ears / all who exist under sharp knife of time.” “Sharp knife of time” is a way of expressing the Hebrew *heled*, a word whose root means both “length of life” and “digging.” “Sharp knife of time,” I felt, encompassed both a sense of mortality and the word’s other meaning of digging or carving out. This attempt to illuminate the full texture of Hebrew words led me at times to craft additional lines or phrases in order to flesh out the feeling of the original.

Over time, my relationship to the psalms shifted. My first ver-

sion attempted to replicate the emotional passion of the psalms, and what emerged was a poetic engagement not afraid to take extensive liberties with the text. Then, perhaps with a fear of how academic readers would react to the work, I went over them with an eye toward the literal. Finally, I opted for what I believe to be a middle ground between strict literality and poetic engagement, with the hopes of awakening for the reader new possibilities for speaking with God.

There were places in the psalms, however, where I translated not literally but according to what seemed to be the underlying intent. Passages such as the ones at the end of Psalm 137, for example, gave me pause. At its most literal this passage proclaims the happiness or praiseworthiness of the one who smashes Babylonian infants upon a rock. Given the political reality of cycles of revenge, let alone the repulsive sentiment of the line itself, I struggled with rendering the line as expressing such praise. In the end, I translated it in keeping with the emotion of the previous line, a longing for persecutors to feel the wrongs they had so carelessly inflicted. Instead of the word “children” I use the words “brightest future,” and instead of praising the individual who wreaks revenge, I opt for a reading that acknowledges the universality of suffering.

Likewise, I wrestled with the end of Psalm 95, which in biblical idiom seems to be the voice of God proclaiming that the Israelites in the desert would not enter into a place of rest. This psalm is used in Kabbalat Shabbat, the Jewish Friday night service that welcomes the tranquility of Shabbat and the angels of peace that accompany it. To interpret the psalm as ending on a note of such profound divine alienation never sat right with me, and I always understood it by reading the language somewhat differently. The word that gives the phrase a negative emphasis is also a word that in other contexts means “if.” In the translation I rendered the line as I made sense of it when praying—as God’s voice overflowing with longing, saying softly, “If only they would come to my place

of rest . . .” To my mind this better reflected the feeling of the psalm.

There is a long Jewish tradition of wrestling with texts and creatively interpreting (and reinterpreting) them. In Hebrew, the word for innovative readings of this sort is midrash. The hermeneutics of midrash always takes as its starting point the actual text and looks for new ways to understand words or passages based on the language itself. The writer of midrash might say, for instance, “Don’t read this word as ‘fear,’ but read it as ‘see.’” Such an interpretation can be justified by the fact that the words for “fear” (as in “fear of God”) and “see” are quite similar in Hebrew and in many conjugations look almost identical. And so, despite this being very much a literal translation, often to the point of interrogating the etymology of the Hebrew root, it is also a midrashic translation in that I have from time to time engaged in creative ways of thinking about the text.

I used this approach as well with passages that seem to emphasize the superiority of Israelites over other people. In my translation, I tend to soften such passages due to a conviction that the psalms stand as religious melodies for all people. I feel confident that I have not departed from the spirit of the psalms nor the words on the page, even when departing from the most literal reading of the text. Always I have been guided by the actual language, the emotional tone of the psalm, and the text that has been received by tradition.

A final example of this approach can be found in Psalm 125. The Hebrew word *Yisrael* (Israel) has been thought by many to signify “one who struggles (or who will struggle) with God.” In all instances besides this one, I have translated *Yisrael* as “Israel.” Here, however, in the context of this psalm and its association with the physical land of Israel, I translated Israel according to its more spiritual meaning, “those who struggle with God.”

Because the psalms have been inextricable from my own prayer

life, I have approached them with liturgical concern, questioning how they might be of use in furthering the spiritual journey of others. An example of this sort of struggle can be seen around the word *mitzvot*, traditionally translated as “commandments.” The word “commandments” always struck me as too legalistic and authoritarian to express what the word conveys in its best sense, which is a wondrous consciousness of God’s presence and blessings, along with a reverent commitment to fulfilling God’s will. I have tried to evoke that sense of the word in my rendering, and have done likewise with other words and concepts.

One of the most significant difficulties I encountered in translating had to do with the use of gender in the psalms, both in reference to God and in reference to the anonymous representative of humanity. Hebrew is a gendered language, so everything is masculine or feminine, even a door or a table. Indeed, gender is a function of the language’s very structure. Although the psalms’ subjects are primarily masculine, I have taken the liberty of occasionally translating the word “he” or “man” in the psalms as either the plural “they” or “she” or “woman.” In doing this, I mean to suggest to the reader that the psalms speak equally to either gender. They stand as existential testimony, not particularized experience.

In some instances, however, I thought the masculine pronoun important to retain. For one thing, the “he” of the psalms is often a way for the psalmist to articulate his own predicament (and yes, the overwhelming likelihood is that the psalms were written by a man or men), a dynamic of the psalms I felt it important to retain. For another, avoiding the specificity of gender sometimes made the psalm feel too abstract. Translation is always a flawed art, and a translator is always making choices about competing claims. I made such choices as best as I could.

When it came to God, however, I grew increasingly convinced of the need to translate divinity in a way that was neither masculine nor feminine. This was not an easy choice. Avoiding references to

gender creates real difficulties in translation, and the liturgical attempts I had heard often sounded awkward and strained to my ear. But I am keenly aware that reference to God as masculine is a stumbling block for many, not to mention theologically inadequate, and the imperative to be inclusive eventually won out. I found that in order to translate with an ear toward poetry, I needed to be creative. Sometimes I changed the third person to the second person, substituting the word “he” with the word “you”; other times I used one of God’s attributes in its place. I did my best to preserve both the poetry and vibrancy of these lines.

Besides passages such as these, the psalms contain many words or phrases in which even the simple meaning is ambiguous. Such passages demand interpretation, which I have unabashedly done. In this, I make no pretense to absolute claim on the truth. I invariably translated in keeping with my overall sense of the psalm, often after consulting other renderings, understandings, and commentaries.

Some readers may be troubled at the psalms’ often-expressed desire for revenge. To many of us, convinced of the virtues of tolerance and universalism, such an emotion seems an affront to religious life, not a useful expression of it. And when taken as a theological imperative, this is absolutely the case. But such revenge fantasies stand not as expressions of a pious ideal toward which one should strive but rather as deeply human outbursts of insuppressible frustration. They express the truth of what *is*, not the ideal of how things *ought to be*. They further our religious life in much the same way literature does. By finding the expression of our own frustration mirrored in another, we achieve the mimesis and catharsis Aristotle talks about in his *Poetics* as essential qualities of tragedy. I have struggled with such passages, sometimes rendering them in a way that is more generous in tone, but often leaving them to sit with the reader in all their naked humanity.

Such passages may reflect the truth of our experience, but they are still (and should be) troubling. What they reflect is the act of

approaching God honestly—with our anger, our sense of moral outrage, our wish for vindication. They remind us that our theological ideals are not, in fact, our prayer. Our prayer always begins exactly where we are, with our particularities of pain and suffering, the particularity of our outrage. Only in this way does the “enemy” of the psalms become understandable and useful.

The “enemy” also has a long tradition of being understood as a personification of one’s struggle with suffering, such as that of poverty, addiction, depression, or illness. Mitchell Dahood, in the Anchor Bible translation of the psalms, often identifies the Foe as death, drawing upon Canaanite mythology that depicts the battle between Mot (Death) and Baal, two warring gods. Metaphorical readings such as this are in keeping with the psalms’ existential tone. I have sometimes, as in Psalm 23, translated the word “enemy” as “fear,” as that seems to me more expressive of the psalm’s intention.

In bringing a personal approach, I am no different from any other translator. I have my own sense of what makes these words cry and breathe and shout. The psalms have been at my side both during times of overwhelming gratitude and during stretches when it felt like the dark clouds would never lift. Quite often they gave voice to an emotion that I could not fully articulate myself. Through the ups and downs of existence, they have proved deeply instrumental in preserving my faith and sense of the possibility of relating to God.

In many ways, then, the translation reflects my own struggle with the psalms and experience of them as prayers. My wish is that this struggle be continued by the reader. The psalms have been the most loyal accompaniments to my religious life. I hope that the translation proves useful to others as they undertake the adventure of faith, through its many pathways of joy, sadness, or doubt, and through the challenging landscape of emotional expression and prayer.

A Note About the Text of the Psalms

According to religious tradition, the psalms were written by the biblical David. This claim is complicated by the fact that in their superscriptions many psalms are attributed to others—Asaf, the offspring of Korach, Heman the Ezrachite, and Moses, to name a few. Modern scholars dispute the claim that the historical David authored the psalms and tend to believe that they were written over a period of time ranging from the age of David (1100–900 BCE) until well into the Second Temple Period. Psalm 137, for instance, makes reference to the Babylonian Exile, which makes a claim of Davidic authorship extraordinarily problematic, as the Babylonian Exile did not begin until 586 BCE, well after the life of David. Nevertheless, like all biblical literature, the psalms stand on both a historical plane and a mythological one. I have always been moved by the idea of attributing all the psalms to a single individual because their emotional scope is so wide and because they present such a vast and human spectrum of ways to relate to the divine.

While we know very few things about the details of the Temple service in Jerusalem, one thing we do know is that the psalms were used as liturgy very early on, as early as the First Temple Period. Some psalms, such as the Songs of Uplift (traditionally translated as “Songs of Ascent”), were most likely chanted as a worshipper ascended Zion, the Temple Mount. Others almost certainly were

chanted as part of the sacrificial rite, and these were quite possibly accompanied by musical instruments. Some, in fact, make direct reference to instrumentation. Fifty-eight psalms are introduced by the Hebrew word *mizmor*, meaning “melodic ode,” and thirteen are introduced by the designation *shir*, meaning “song.”

Song and chant have long been a way of lifting up our emotions to the divine. Even today, song or chant constitutes a major part of both Jewish and Christian ritual. The modulations of tone that are possible in song allow for a greater expression of passion and intensity than do words alone. Song is a vehicle of both longing and praise, and by its very nature, the act of singing out our suffering to God transforms it.

Other psalms seem more intimate in tone and origin, and it is probably the case that their usage was more personal, at least early on. When sacrifice was replaced by prayer during the Babylonian Exile (586 BCE), the psalms became a central part of the daily, Shabbat, and holiday liturgy, and some of these psalms were incorporated into the communal prayer ritual. The psalms later came to play a central part in Christian liturgy as well, and make up the central part of the Liturgy of Hours, a set of daily prayers in the Catholic tradition. In Protestantism, too, the psalms figure prominently in the liturgy, and have often been set to music as hymns.

The superscriptions, which appear in many but not all of the psalms, are universally believed to be a later addition, and some of the characters mentioned in them are now unknown. It is important to mention that Korach, one of the people who can be positively identified, is portrayed in the Bible as rebelling against Moses, and indirectly against God. To attribute psalms to his offspring is to indirectly affirm the possibility of transformation and atonement.

The psalms also make reference to biblical stories, and I include some of these references in the notes (available online at www.thecompletepsalms.com). Some of the characters, such as

Og and Sichon, are notorious enemies of the people of Israel as they wandered the desert. Other names stand for an entire people, as in the case of Cham, one of Noah's sons. In the Bible, Cham is cursed for having witnessed his father's nakedness, and in the psalms Cham seems to stand for the land of Egypt, the place where the descendants of the biblical Cham ultimately settled. It is not so important to know the identity or context of all the characters who appear in the psalms, as the contents of the psalms stand on their own. It is important to note that some of the people mentioned are archetypal enemies of Israel, such as Og, king of Bashan, and Sichon, king of the Emorites. Both of these are seen as unjustly attacking Israel as it wandered in the wilderness.

A few words in the psalms deserve special mention, as they appear in forms transliterated from Hebrew. One word is "Selah," the meaning of which is somewhat uncertain, but which seems to have the effect of a musical exclamation mark, a sign that what preceded it should receive a certain amount of emphasis. It is more or less untranslatable, so I have let it stand.

Another word is "Halleluyah," a phrase that literally means "praise God." The root *hallel* also means "to shine," and so I have sometimes translated this as "shine your praises on God." In other psalms, I include the word "Halleluyah" in addition to the translation, as it has become so resonant and expressive of passionate praise.

Beyond this, it is important to emphasize that the language of the psalms often comprises unorthodox or ambiguous Hebrew, along with loan words from neighboring dialects. Part of the reason that translations of the psalms differ so widely is because one is compelled to interpret them as one goes along.

Psalm 1



Blessed are those who walked
not influenced by the guilty,

who in the path without purpose did not linger;
in the dwellings of scorners did not long dwell.

They are consumed with the teaching of God
and meditate on divine wisdom both day and night.

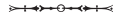
They will be like a tree transplanted along a breach in
the river
that yields fruit at its appointed season

and whose leaves never cease to produce;
all their labor streams forth to fruition.

Not so with those who act wrongly.
They are like chaff carried by changes in wind.

The wrongful will not stand in the light of justice,
nor the purposeless in gathered testimony of the true
of heart.

Because God attends to the road of the righteous
and the road of the wrongful is covered with weeds.

Psalm 2

Why do crowds rush around restless?
And why do nations contemplate empty goals?

Kings of the earth stand brazenly,
while princes conspire in secret,
against God and against the anointed.

They say:
“Let us break the ropes of their oppression!
Let us throw off the thick weave of heavenly rule!”

The one enthroned in the sky will make light of them,
shrugging at their fearless pride.

Then with words of righteous anger,
God’s heavenly disapproval will fill them with dread:

*I have anointed my king on Zion,
mountain where my holiness dwells.*

I am the one who creates eternal law.

God said to me, *You are my child.*
I give birth to you each day.

*Come to me with your perplexities
and I will make people your inheritance;
your possessions will extend to the ends of the earth.*

*If you break them with a staff of iron,
they will shatter like a vessel of clay.*

And now, kings of all countries, awake!
Judges of the earth, discipline yourselves.

Serve the Eternal with wonder
and rejoice that in the divine presence you quake.

Make purity your only weapon,
lest in the heat of holy anger
the way back to your Redeemer be lost.

Because God's outrage at wrong blazes quickly,
happy are those who take refuge in their Creator's
will.

Psalm 3



A PSALM OF DAVID,
WHEN HE FLED BEFORE ABSALOM, HIS SON.

God, how many are the pursuers that crush against
me!

Many rise up to wreak my harm.

Many are the ones who say to my soul's flesh:
salvation of God will not come to him—Selah.

But you are the Holy One, a shield that surrounds me
completely,
source of my glory, the one who raises my head.

When my voice cries out to you,
you answer from your holy mountain—Selah.

I lay down to sleep, but in the morning I awake
because you help me to stand upright.

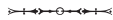
I will not fear contentious multitudes
who surround me on every side.

Wake up, my Upholder, bring me salvation, my God!

Strike my opposers in the face.
The teeth of the wrongful, shatter them into shards.

God is the source of salvation.
Upon your people is your blessing—Selah.

Psalm 4



FOR THE CONDUCTOR OF THE ETERNAL SYMPHONY,
UPON THE STRINGED INSTRUMENTS,
A PSALM OF DAVID.

In my calling out to you, let the answer be implied,
God who knows my complaint to be a just one.

In times of anguish, you have widened my way.
Now, with overflowing kindness, pay attention to my
prayer.

Mortals, why do you put my honor to shame?
You lust after emptiness and quest for deception—
Selah.

But know that the one who loves the Eternal is singled
out.

My Upholder will listen
when I call out the Holy Name.

Tremble when you contemplate
all the ways you have missed the mark.

Speak to God in your heart,
when you lie upon your bed
speak to the Holy One with your silence—Selah.

Offer as sacrifice only your righteous acts
and put your trust in the Source of Hope.

Many are the ones who say:
Who will illumine for us the good?

You lift the light of your face above us,
placing gladness in my heart
even when the enemy's grain and wine abound.

With peace and contentment, I lie down and sleep.
Because you, God, are with the lonely,
help me to dwell in trust.