

# *Psalms* of Comfort

The recitation of psalms – sacred songs or hymns – in times of distress, uncertainty and thanksgiving provides comfort, as they reflect a personal relationship with God. There are 150 psalms whose authorship is attributed to King David (10th century B.C.E.), and they are the most famous of all religious poetry, beseeching God’s mercy and protection. Some are recited every day, and others are particularly relevant in a time of mourning. If you are preparing for a funeral or unveiling, or just seeking personal comfort and knowledge, below are a few select psalms that we found meaningful.

## **PSALM 16**

Protect me, Eternal One, for I seek refuge in You.

I say to God: “You are Adonai, there is none beyond You.”

Adonai is my allotted share and portion.

I bless Adonai who has guided me; my conscience admonishes me at night.

I am ever mindful of the Divine Presence who is at my right hand; I shall never be shaken.

So my heart rejoices; my whole being exults, and my body rests secure.

## PSALM 23

[Translation]

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; He guideth me in straight paths for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,  
for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;  
Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;  
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

[Transliteration]

Mizmor l'David.

Adonoy ro-i, lo echsar. Bin-ot desheh yarbitzayni,  
al may m'nuchot y'nahalayni. Nafshi y'shovayv,  
yanchayni v'ma-g'lay tzedek l'ma-an sh'mo.

Gam ki aylaych b'gay tzalmaves lo ira ra  
ki atah imadi, shivt'cha umish-antecha, haymah y'nachamuni.

Ta-aroch l'fanai shulchan, neged tzor'roy,  
dishantah vashemen roshi, kosi r'vayah.

Ach tov vachesed yird'funi kol y'may chayoy,  
v'shavti b'vayt Adonoy l'orecha yamim.

[Hebrew]

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: יְהוָה רֹעִי, לֹא אֶחְסָר.  
בְּנְאוֹת דָּשָׁא, יִרְבִּיצֵנִי; עַל-מֵי מְנוּחוֹת יִנְהַלֵּנִי.  
נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבָב; יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי-צֶדֶק, לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ.  
גַּם כִּי-אֶלֶף בְּגִי אֶצְלַמֹּת, לֹא-אִירָא רָע-- כִּי-אַתָּה עִמָּדִי;  
שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתְּךָ, הִמָּה יִנְחַמֵּנִי.  
תַּעֲרֶךְ לִפְנֵי, שְׁלֹחַן-- נֶגֶד צַרְרֵי;  
דֹּשַׁנֶּת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי, כּוֹסֵי רוּחָה.  
אֶךְ, טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי-- כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי;  
וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה, לְאֶרְךָ יָמִים.

## PSALM 32

Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Happy is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not hide my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

For this shall every one who is pious pray to You in a time when You may be found; then surely the floods of great waters shall not come near him.

You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble;  
You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

I will instruct You and teach You in the way which You shall go; I will counsel You with my eye upon You.

Do not be like the horse, or like the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they do not come near You.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked; but loving kindness shall surround him who trusts in the Lord.

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, You righteous; and shout for joy, all You who are upright in heart.

## PSALM 34:19

Adonai is close to the brokenhearted, And helps those crushed in spirit.

## PSALM 41

Happy is he who considers the poor; the Lord will save in the day of evil.

The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; he is called happy on earth;  
and You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies.

The Lord will strengthen him on his sick bed; whenever he is prostrate You will heal all his illnesses.

I said, Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against You.

My enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?

And if one comes to see me, he speaks vanity; his heart gathers iniquity to itself;  
when he goes out, he tells it.

All who hate me whisper together against me; against me they plot my harm.

They say, An evil disease cleaves fast to him, and from where he lies he shall rise up no more.

Even my own close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

But You, O Lord, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may pay them back.

By this I know that You favor me, because my enemy does not triumph over me.

And as for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and You set me before Your face for ever.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

## PSALM 42:2-6

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: 'When shall I come and appear before God?'

My tears have been my food day and night, while they say unto me all the day: 'Where is Thy God?'

These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me, how I passed on with the throng,  
and led them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holyday.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why moanest thou within me? Hope thou in God;  
for I shall yet praise Him for the salvation of His countenance.

## PSALM 77

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, that he may hear me.

In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; my hand is stretched out in the night, and does not rest;  
my soul refuses to be comforted.

I remember God, and I moan; I meditate and my spirit faints. Selah.

You hold my eyelids from closing; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

I consider the days of old, the years of ancient times.

I remember my melody in the night; I talk with my heart; and my spirit searches.

Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favorable no more?

Has his loving kindness ceased for ever? Does his promise fail for evermore?

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.

And I said, It is my sickness that the right hand of the Most High has changed.

I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old.

And I will meditate on all Your work, and muse on Your deeds.

Your way, O God, is holy. Who is so great a God as our God?

You are the God that does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the people.

With Your arm You have redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid; the depths also trembled.

The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; Your arrows flashed on every side.

The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightnings lightened the world;

the earth trembled and shook.

Your way was through the sea, and Your path through the great waters; and Your footsteps were not known.

You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

## PSALM 90

O God, You have been our refuge in every generation.

Before the mountains came into being, before You brought forth the earth and the world,  
from eternity to eternity You are God.

You return us to dust; Your decree: "Return, you mortals!"

For in Your sight a thousand years are as yesterday when it has passed, as a watch in the night.

You engulf us in sleep; we are like grass that renews itself; at daybreak it flourishes anew; at dusk it withers  
and dries up. The span of our life is threescore years and ten, or, given strength, fourscore years;  
But the best of those years have trouble and sorrow.

They pass by speedily, and we are in darkness.

Teach us, therefore, so to number our days that we may attain a heart of wisdom, Turn to us, O God!

Show mercy to Your servants.

Satisfy us at daybreak with Your steadfast love That we may sing for joy all our days.

Let Your deeds be seen by Your servants, Your glory by their children.

May Your favor, O God, be upon us.

Establish the work of our hands that it may long endure.

## PSALM 91

You Who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, Who abides in the shadow of the Omnipotent,

I say [to you] of the Lord Who is my refuge and my stronghold, my G-d in Whom I trust,

that He will save you from the ensnaring trap, from the destructive pestilence.

He will cover you with His pinions and you will find refuge under His wings; His truth is a shield and an armor.

You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

the pestilence that prowls in the darkness, nor the destruction that ravages at noon.

A thousand may fall at your [left] side, and ten thousand at your right, but it shall not reach you.

You need only look with your eyes, and you will see the retribution of the wicked.

Because you [have said,] "The Lord is my shelter," and you have made the Most High your haven,

no evil will befall you, no plague will come near your tent.

For He will instruct His angels in your behalf, to guard you in all your ways.

They will carry you in their hands, lest you hurt your foot on a rock.

You will tread upon the lion and the viper; you will trample upon the young lion and the serpent.

Because he desires Me, I will deliver him; I will fortify him for he knows My Name.

When he calls on Me, I will answer him; I am with him in distress, I will deliver him and honor him.

I will satisfy him with long life, and show him My deliverance.

## PSALM 121

I lift my eyes to the mountains; What is the source of my help?

My help comes from Adonai, Maker of heaven and earth.

God will not let your foot give way; your Protector will not slumber.

See, the Protector of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!

God is your Guardian, God is your protection at your right hand.

The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

God will guard you from all harm God will guard your soul, your going and coming, now and forever.

## PSALM 103:13-17

As a father has compassion for his children Adonai has compassion for those who show reverence.

God knows how we are fashioned, God remembers that we are dust.

The days of mortals are like grass; We flourish as the flowers of the field.

A wind passes over them and they are not more; And no one can recognize where they grew.

But adonai's compassion is everlasting.

God's kindness to children's children, To all the reverent ones, Endures, age after age, unchanging.

## ECCLESIASTES 3

For everything there is a season, a time for every experience under heaven:

A time to be born and a time to die,

A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted,

A time to tear down and a time to build up,

A time to weep and a time to laugh,

A time to grieve and a time to dance,

A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones,

A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

A time to seek and a time to lose,

A time to keep and a time to discard,

A time to tear and a time to sew,

A time to keep silence, and a time to speak,

A time to love, and a time to hate,

A time for war, and a time for peace.