

– A Psalter for Prayer –

Ed. Note: This psalter is a collection of psalms intended to be meaningful for intensely intimate personal prayer. The goal of the translation is to find a prayerful balance in keeping as accurately to the original Hebrew wording and phrasing as is possible while taking into account idiomatic American English.

Our faith tradition takes consideration for appropriate reverence in the pronunciation of the name by which God identifies Himself to mankind. Known as the “tetragrammaton”—meaning “four letters”—tradition informs us not to pronounce it. Therefore, while keeping the original word in the text, the reader can pronounce it as the conventional “LORD” (or “the LORD” as grammar dictates), or as in the Jewish tradition “Adonai,” which has the meaning of a lord or master with a connotation of a ruler of people. The most perfect form is pronounced “Yahweh.” The original of the tetragrammaton is found in Ex 3:14. When one comes upon this Name in the following psalms, pronounce it as you are called in your relationship with our personal God.

As an aid in prayer selection, each psalm’s type appears in braces above and to its right.

Praise YHWH!

[Wisdom]

Psalm 1

Happy are those who do not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in company with scoffers.

Rather, the law of YHWH is their delight; and on His law they meditate day and night.

They are like a tree planted near streams of water, that yields its fruit in season;
Its leaves never wither, whatever they do prospers.

But not so the wicked, not so! They are like chaff driven by the wind.

So the wicked will not arise at the judgment, nor will sinners in the assembly of the just.
Because YHWH knows the way of the just, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.

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[Royal]

Psalm 2

Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?

Kings on earth rise up and princes take counsel together
against YHWH and against his anointed one:

“Let us break their shackles and cast off their chains from us!”

The one enthroned in the heavens laughs; YHWH derides them.
Then he speaks to them in his wrath; in his fury he terrifies them:
“I myself have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”

I will proclaim the decree of YHWH: he said to me,

“You are my son; today I have begotten you.

Ask it of me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
and, as your possession, the ends of the earth.

With an iron rod you will break them, dash them into pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

And now, kings, give heed; take warning, judges throughout the land.

Serve YHWH with fear, and rejoice with trembling;

Accept correction lest he become angry and you perish along the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Happy are all who take refuge in him!

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[Lamentation, Individual]

Psalm 3

(A psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.)

O YHWH, how many are my foes! How many rise against me!
How many say of me, “There is no salvation for him in God.”

Selah

But you, YHWH, are a shield around me; my glory, you keep my head high.
With my voice, to YHWH will I cry out, and he will answer me from his holy mountain.

Selah

I lie down and fall asleep; I wake up again for YHWH sustains me.
I will not fear, then, thousands of people arrayed against me on every side.

Arise, O YHWH! Save me, O my God!
You will shatter the jawbone of all my foes; you will break the teeth of the wicked.

From YHWH is the salvation! Upon your people may your blessing be!

Selah

[Lamentation, Individual]

Psalm 4

(For the leader; with stringed instruments. A psalm of David.)

Answer me when I call, my saving God.
When troubles hem me in, set me free; take pity on me, hear my prayer.

How long, O people, will you be hard of heart?
Why do you love what is worthless, chase after lies?

Selah

Know that YHWH works wonders for his faithful one; YHWH hears when I call out to him.

Tremble and sin no more; weep bitterly within your hearts, wail upon your beds.
Offer fitting sacrifices and trust in YHWH.

Many say, “May we see better times! YHWH, show us the light of your face!”

Selah

But you have given my heart more joy than they have when grain and wine abound.
In peace I will lie down and fall asleep, for you alone, YHWH, make me secure.

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[Praise]

Psalm 8

YHWH, our Lord,

How awesome is your name throughout the earth!

You have set your majesty above the heavens!

With the mouths of babes and infants You have established a bulwark against your foes,
to silence enemy and avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars that You set in place—

What are humans that You are mindful of them? and a son of man that You care for him?

Yet You have made him little less than a god, crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him rule over the works of your hands,
put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field, the birds of
the air, the fish of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

YHWH, our Lord, How awesome is your name throughout the earth!

[Lamentation, Communal]

Psalm 12

(For the leader; “upon the eighth [sheminith].” A psalm of David.)

Help YHWH, for no one loyal remains; the faithful have vanished from mankind.

They tell lies to one another, speak with deceiving lips and a double heart.

May YHWH cut off all deceiving lips, and every boastful tongue, of those who say,
“By our tongues we prevail; when our lips speak, who can lord it over us?”

“Because they rob the weak, and the needy groan, I will now arise,” says YHWH;
“I will grant safety to whoever longs for it.”

The promises of YHWH are sure, silver refined in a crucible, silver purified seven times.

You, O YHWH, protect us always; preserve us from this generation.

On every side the wicked roam; the shameless are extolled by the children of men.

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[Thanksgiving]

Psalm 23

YHWH is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

In green pastures He gives me repose; beside still waters He leads me; He refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths for His namesake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil,
for You are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.

You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes;
You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the House of YHWH for years to come.

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[Penitential]

Psalm 51

(For the leader. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.)

Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love.
In your abundant compassion blot out my offense;
thoroughly wash away my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my offenses; my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone have I sinned; what is evil in your eyes I have done.
So you are just in your sentence, and without reproach in your judgment.

Surely, in guilt was I born; a sinner even as my mother conceived me.
Surely, you desire sincerity of heart; then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.

Purify me that I may be cleansed; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear gladness and joy; the bones you have crushed will rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my guilt.

A pure heart create for me, O God, and renew within me a steadfast spirit.
Do not cast me away from your presence, nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation; sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach the wicked your ways, that sinners may return to you.

Rescue me from bloodshed, God, my saving God,
and my tongue shall sing of your deliverance.
O Adonai, open my lips; and my mouth will declare your praise.

For in sacrifice you take no delight; a burnt offering from me, you would refuse.
My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a contrite humbled heart, O God, you will not scorn.

Treat Zion kindly according to your good will; build up the walls of Jerusalem.
Then will you be pleased with proper sacrifices—burnt offerings and holocausts;
then young bulls will be offered on your altar.

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[Thanksgiving]

Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us; may his face shine upon us.
So shall your way be known upon the earth, your victory among all the nations.

May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you!

May the nations be glad and rejoice;
for you judge the peoples with fairness, you guide the nations upon the earth.

May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you!

The earth has yielded its harvest; God, our God, blesses us.
May God bless us still; that the ends of the earth may revere him.

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[Thanksgiving]

Psalm 91

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
say to YHWH, “My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.”

For He will rescue you from the fowler’s snare, from the deadly plague;
He will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge;
his faithfulness is a protecting shield.

You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day;
nor the pestilence that roams in darkness, nor the plague that ravages at noon.

Though a thousand fall at your side—ten thousand at your right hand—near you it shall
not come.

Watch merely with your eyes and you will see the punishment of the wicked.

As you have YHWH for your refuge and have made the Most High your stronghold, no evil
shall befall you, no disaster come near your tent.

For he commands his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.

In their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread upon the asp and the viper, trample the lion and the dragon.

As one clings to me, I will rescue him;
because he knows my name I will set him on high.

He will call upon me and I will answer;
I will be with him in distress;
I will deliver him and honor him.

With length of days I will satisfy him,
and show him my salvation.

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[Praise]

Psalm 100

(A psalm of Thanksgiving.)

Shout joyfully to YHWH, all you lands;
serve YHWH with gladness;
come before him with joyful song.

Know that YHWH is God, he made us, we belong to him,
we are his people, the flock he shepherds

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name; good indeed is YHWH,

His mercy endures forever,
his faithfulness lasts through every generation.

[Royal/Messianic]

Psalm 110

(A psalm of David.)

YHWH says to my master:

“Sit at my right hand, while I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

YHWH will extend your mighty scepter out from Zion.

You will rule over your enemies; your people will join you on your day of battle.

In holy splendor before the daystar, like dew I begot you.

YHWH has sworn and will not waver: “You are a priest forever, such as is Melchizedek.”

Adonai is at your right hand, crushing kings on the day of his wrath.

He will judge the pagan peoples, heaping up the dead and crushing rulers of all the earth,
He drinks from the brook beside the path, therefore he holds high his head.

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[Thanksgiving]

Psalm 116

I love YHWH, for He heard my voice, He heard my cry for mercy.
Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live.

The cords of death entangled me; the snares of Sheol seized me; I felt agony and dread.
Then I called on the name of YHWH, “O YHWH, save my life!”

Gracious is YHWH and righteous; our God is merciful.
YHWH protects the simple-hearted; I was helpless yet he saved me.

Be at rest once more, O my soul, for YHWH has been good to you.
For my soul has been freed from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,
that I may walk before YHWH in the land of the living.

I kept faith even as I said, “I am greatly afflicted!” I said in my alarm, “All men are liars!”

How can I repay YHWH for all the good done for me?
I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of YHWH.
I will pay my vows to YHWH in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the eyes of YHWH is the death of his faithful ones.

O YHWH, I am your servant;
I am your servant, offspring of your maidservant; you have loosed my bonds.

I will offer a sacrifice of praise and call on the name of YHWH.
I will pay my vows to YHWH in the presence of all his people,
in the courts of the house of YHWH, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Hallelujah!

[Praise]

Psalm 117

Praise YHWH, all you nations! Acclaim Him, all you peoples!
Strong is His love for us; YHWH is forever faithful.
Hallelujah!

– A Psalter for Prayer –

[Penitential]

Psalm 130

(A song of ascents.)

Out of the depths I cry to you, YHWH; Adonai, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to my pleading voice.

If you, YHWH, keep track of guilt, Adonai, who could stand?
But with you is forgiveness and so you are revered.

I wait for YHWH, my soul waits; I hope for his word.
My soul longs for Adonai more than sentinels for daybreak.
More than sentinels for daybreak, let Israel long for YHWH.

For with YHWH is mercy, with YHWH is full redemption!
And he will redeem Israel from all its sins.

[Praise]

Psalm 150

Hallelujah!

Praise God in his holy sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.

Give praise for his mighty deeds;
praise him for his great majesty.

Give praise with blasts upon the horn;
praise him with harp and lyre.

Give praise with tambourines and dance;
praise him with strings and pipes.

Give praise with crashing cymbals;
praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that lives and breathes give praise to YHWH!

Hallelujah!