

Psalm Therapy: The Psychotherapeutic Use of Psalms

Academy for Jewish Religion Master's Project

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אֹדֶתְךָ בְּכָל-לִבִּי יְיָ אֱלֹהִים אֲמַרְךָ:

I praise You with all my heart, sing a hymn to You before the divine beings; (Psalm 138:1)

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Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. (Psalm 19:2)

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The Therapeutic Use of Psalms

שִׁי יְדַבֵּר חֲכָמֹת וְהִגִּית לִּי תְבוּנוֹת:

My mouth utters wisdom, my speech is full of insight. (Psalm 49:4)

Introduction

The Book Psalms has nourished our souls for over 2500 years because it speaks to the human condition. By reading Psalms with a therapeutic use in mind, the Psalms can become speech for one's inner feelings that may otherwise be difficult to access. This project explores the ways in which one can use the Book of Psalms for healing in a psycho-therapeutic setting.

What is Healing?

Healing is not necessarily a cure. In Judaism, healing has two components, body and soul (spirit). Healing of body means finding a cure. Healing of spirit involves creating a pathway to a sense of wholeness and peace. The idea of healing can be seen as far back as the TaNaCH. It is seen when Aaron and Miriam talk badly about Moses. Miriam is then struck with Tzora'at (a skin disease). (Numbers 12:1-13). Upon seeing this, Moses prays for God to heal her saying, "*El na refanah la.*" O God, pray heal her)¹ In order to start the healing process, one must put the suffering into words and the words must be heard by others. As Kristen Swenson (b. 1967) writes, "Sometimes the telling itself facilitates healing"²

Healing comes from touching the deepest part of ourselves, in seeking comfort from the Divine and others.³ The Japanese have created a technique called Kitsugi. This technique reassembles a broken object and makes it more beautiful than it was to begin with. It accepts that life can be repaired and embraces the concept of brokenness.⁴ One can find that "...there is something sacred in the wholeness of a person, and that healing is the process of integrating experiences..."⁵into life as a whole.

The Choice of God Language in This Project

Two of the many names for God in Hebrew are translated into English into two different words. There are the names for God that are based on the Hebrew word El, i.e. Elohim, Eloheinu and Elyon; these are translated as the word "God." There is also the Tetragrammaton, YHVH, which is the four letter name of God that is unvocalized in Hebrew but is pronounced "Adonai" by Jews. Christians often pronounce this word as either Yahweh or Jehovah. In English, the Tetragrammaton is almost always translated as Lord.

In recent decades, in America, liturgists who wish to use non-gendered God language or non-anthropomorphic language for God use a variety of terms: Eternal, Source, Creator, Holy One of

Blessing, Higher Power, Divine, Mighty One, Spirit and more. In this project, the alternative language for God will primarily be the word Divine

In the text of the Psalms presented in this project (in the Addendum) the God language used is that which is found in the Jewish Publication Society English translation of the Book of Psalms. The texts that were created for healing use a variety of God language.

About the Book of Psalms

Poetry is considered to be one of the oldest literary forms.⁶ It was a literary form that was shared by many societies in the Ancient Near East.⁷ The Book of Psalms is one of the most important books of poetry in the TaNaCh. Within it one finds words for feelings and emotions for the Jewish community and for individuals.⁸ Its appeal rests on its “success in addressing our basic spiritual needs and human emotions.”⁹ According to Walter Brueggemann (b. 1933) in writing about the spirituality of the Book of Psalms, “...life is understood to be a pilgrimage or process through the darkness that belongs properly to humanness.”¹⁰

The Book of Psalms was composed by many different poets over many centuries. These poems were adopted from the formal system of poetry seen in other Ancient Near Eastern literature and are rooted in the Ancient Near Eastern world going back as far as 1600-1200 B.C.E.¹¹

The Psalms started as an oral tradition in the context of worship.¹² The Book of Psalms was compiled in the Second Temple (post exilic) period.¹³ By the 1st century C.E. the Book of Psalms was already part of the scriptural cannon.¹⁴

The importance and popularity of the Book of Psalms can be attested to by their use in the books of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.) Of the psalms that are part of this project. Psalm 6 is found in both Matthew and Luke.¹⁵ Psalm 22 figures prominently in stories related to the crucifixion, for example, verse 1 is found in Matthew and Mark,¹⁶ verse 7 in both Matthew and Mark,¹⁷ verse 8 is seen in Matthew¹⁸ and verse 18 is found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.¹⁹ Psalm 42 is found in Matthew and Mark.²⁰ Psalm 88 is found in Luke.,²¹ Psalm 91 is found in Matthew.²² Psalm 110 is found in Luke.²³ Psalm 118 is found in Mark.²⁴ These are just a few examples of the use of psalms in the Gospels.

The Book of Psalms presents the reader with a wide range of emotions. Although the Book of Psalms is generally viewed as a single entity, the Book is actually divided into five sections.

Division of the Book of Psalms into separate books is evident in the blessings at the end of Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106 and 150²⁵

This project primarily deals with the category of Lament Psalms. (See page 11.) These are found throughout the Book of Psalms. The Lament Psalms chosen for this project are Psalms 6, 22, 38, 42, 88, 102 and 142. These psalms were chosen because they reflect the mental health symptoms described in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 5.) Two additional psalms - 126 and 131- are not Lament Psalms. These were chosen because they present a vision of healing and hope.

Gender Neutral Language in the Psalms

Hebrew is a gendered language which favors the masculine gender when referring to God. For this reason, many translations from the Hebrew follow this linguistic form. Traditionally, translations render God language in the masculine as well – He, Him, King etc.

Since the 1970's, there has been a growing awareness of the need for reconsideration of gendered God language in liturgy and in some translations of the Bible. In developing useful material for Psalm Therapy, a guiding principle, for the purpose of this project, was to use gender neutral, non-exclusionary and non-binary language.

How Psalms are used in Judaism

Psalms were created for worship. They would either be used by an individual when they came to the Temple to worship or for the community as a whole. There are fourteen Psalms that are mentioned in ancient sources as having been sung in the Temple. They are Psalms 24, 30, 48, 81, 82, 92-94 and 113-118. Psalms 24, 48, 82, 94, 81, 93 and 92 are mentioned in Mishnah Tamid 7:4²⁶. These are said one a day every week in this order. The Babylonian Talmud also mentions the above Psalms in Rosh Hashana 31a.²⁷

When looking at the siddur one can see that it is compiled from material from the TaNaCH and other Jewish literary sources. This includes the Book of Psalms. For example, Hallel, a section in which the Divine is praised on certain holy days is made up of Psalms 113-118.²⁸ The Kabbalat Shabbat service (Friday evening) makes use of Psalms 92, 93, 95-99 and 29²⁹.

Psalm 23 is a text that is familiar to both Jews and Christians. It is used in times of pain and times of loss. It is recited during funerals and memorial services. It is familiarity with this particular Psalm that brings comfort and helps calm one's soul.

Traditions Related to the Non-ritual Use of Psalms

There are a number of different uses of the Psalms. These uses are not guided by halacha; rather they seem to be guided by minhag (custom.) For example, Psalms may be recited when a person is ill or in distress and when one is acting as a shomer (guardian) of the body of a person who has just died.

Rebbe Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (1924-2014) taught there is the tradition of reciting the verses of Psalm 119 (an acrostic psalm) to spell out a sick person's name.³⁰ It is also a known custom that the Book of Psalms can be divided by a group in order to say all the psalms for a person who is ill.³¹

The use of Psalms in a healing context is a form of personal prayer. As such, it does not seem to be regulated by *halakhah* (Jewish Law.) There seems to be a very wide variation in the way Psalms are used for healing. Different communities have their own customs. This seems to be true for both Christian and Jewish communities.

Beginnings of Modern Jewish Spirituality Through Psalms

Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi, a Rabbinic Sage from the first half of the third century C.E and a commentator mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud explained that the Book of Psalms was composed of ten expressions of prayer (melodies). These are: *Nitzuach* (leading), *Niggun* (melody), *Maskil* (Insight), *Mizmor* (psalm), *Shir* (song), *Ashrei* (happiness), *Tehillah* (song of praise to God), *Tefillah* (prayer), *Hoda'ah* (thanks) and *Halleluyah* (praise and God together).³²

Rashi, a Rabbi from the 11th century C.E., (1040-1105) also teaches that the Book of Psalms was composed with ten expressions of song: with conducting, with melody, with musical accompaniment, with song, with praise, with prayer, with blessing, with thanksgiving, with praise and with praise and God.³³

In recent pre-modern times, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810), the great grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement, was extremely interested in the concept of the use of Psalms for the purpose of healing. Reb Nachman was a great spiritual master. He believed that having a personal conversation with the Divine (*hitbodedut*) helped one find a closer connection with the Divine.

Reb Nachman also taught that spiritual intention (*kavanah*) was fundamental to spiritual connection. He believed that the Psalms had minimal value if they were recited by rote. Rather, he understood that one must identify with the Psalm's content in a deep and meaningful way if repetition was to be effective. He urged his students to find the self in every Psalm.³⁴

Originally, Reb Nachman believed that the recitation of any ten Psalms was effective with respect to healing. However, he later came to a realization that there are actually ten specific Psalms that have special power to bring a true and complete healing, *Tikkun HaKlali* (The Complete Remedy.)³⁵

Rebbe Nachman's *Tikkun Haklali* includes all ten expressions of prayer (in *Kabbalah*, ten kinds of melody) discussed by Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi. They are Psalms 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137 and 150. These Psalms reflect an unfolding of many emotions that are common to those dealing with physical, spiritual and emotional illness. In the *Likutei Moharan* 1:29 verse 1-2³⁶, Reb Nachman says that the way the Complete Remedy works is that it works on uplifting and enhancing the mind and intellect so as to draw on this for the Complete Remedy³⁷

The ten Psalms can be seen in the following manner.³⁸

- Psalm 16. The understanding that the Divine is always there for us.
- Psalm 32. Introspection is necessary for healing.
- Psalm 41. The contemplation of the struggles of others and the appreciation of the blessings of the Divine.
- Psalm 42. Sees the darkness of exile and the promise of future redemption.
- Psalm 59. Remembers that the Divine controls the world and will avenge the righteous.
- Psalm 77. Understands that prayer and connection with the Divine will bring wondrous times.
- Psalm 90. A meditation on the themes of exile, repentance, mortality, and divine support.
- Psalm 105. A contemplation on the Passover story, particularly the ten plagues.
- Psalm 137. Internalizes the loss and suffering that is experienced.
- Psalm 150. This psalm continues on with confidence and praise of the Divine.

A Discussion of Lament Psalms and Their Form

Lament Psalms are Psalms of complaint that are put in general terms and that speak to universal feelings. According to Walter Brueggemann, within the Lament Psalms "...one finds a great amount of somatic and psychological vocabulary expressing emotional distress."³⁹ The Psalmist asks: do not hide your face from me (Psalm 88:15, 102:3), save me as You have done in the past (Psalm 22:5-6), why have you abandoned me (Psalm 22:2, 38:22) and that the dead cannot praise God (Psalms 6:6,88:11-13). Brueggemann suggests that the Lament Psalms present a model for engagement with the Divine that is transformational.⁴⁰

The Lament Psalm has a basic format which seems to be somewhat flexible. It generally begins with an address to the Divine. This is followed by a middle section that contains the complaint and then the petition. There may then be a segment in which there is an appeal to the Divine's mercy and compassion on behalf of the supplicant. Sometimes there is an appeal to the Justice of the Divine aimed at the enemies of the one who is presenting the plea. The final section of the Lament Psalm can end in one of two different ways. Some Psalms end in thanksgiving. Other Psalms end in a petition or a plea for help.

Are Psalms Prayers?

Jewish prayer is a combination of set words and spontaneous expression.⁴¹ It is a way for one to communicate with, reach to and express feelings for the Divine.⁴² Judaism also sees Torah study as a form of worship. There are many passages from the Torah in the *siddur* (prayer book.)⁴³ The *Shema*, for example, is based on Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41.

All prayer requires the right mindset/intention (*kavanah*) to pray. Music can help with this. There are traditional melodies that are attached to one's prayers in order to help focus one's prayer. According to Reuven Hammer, the Book of Psalms is a magnificent ancient collection of prayers.⁴⁴

Psalms function as both acts of prayer and as an invitation for other prayers that are beyond words. In the words of Thomas Griffith Lewis, "As you pray a psalm, you will bring some pain into the light for God to heal."⁴⁵ "The Biblical Psalms are ultimately therapeutic: they exist for personal healing and for the healing of the world."⁴⁶

Psalm Interpretation

What is Psalm Interpretation? For the purposes of this project, Psalm Interpretation is defined as a way of looking at Psalms to find personal meaning. This is based on the scholarly methods of Form Criticism, Psychological Biblical Criticism and the psycho-therapeutic model of Poetry Therapy.

Form Criticism: Gunkel, Westermann and Brueggemann

The Form Critical method⁴⁷ seeks to separate literary units of the Bible and to classify them according to form and content. Herman Gunkel (1862-1932) is considered the father of Form Criticism. Originally this method was used along with the Documentary Hypothesis to study texts⁴⁸. Form Criticism looks beyond the text to the smaller oral traditions that the literature was composed from to reconstruct the social history of ancient Israel.

Herman Gunkel

Herman Gunkel⁴⁹ used the Form Critical method to classify the Psalms according to genre. He identified five major types of Psalms: individual songs of thanksgiving, individual lament, communal lament, songs of praise and royal psalms. According to Gunkel, the abrupt change of mood in the Lament Psalms shows that the Psalmist is certain that the Psalmist's prayer has been heard. Gunkel's work has been used as the basis for the work of many scholars in their study of the Book of Psalms. His student, Claus Westermann, believed that the Lament Psalm was the primary type of Psalm on which all other types of Psalms were based. Walter Brueggemann, a modern scholar, used Gunkel's categories as the scaffolding for his own way of categorizing the Psalms.

Claus Westermann (1909-2000)

Claus Westermann was a German Protestant "Old Testament" scholar and a student of Herman Gunkel. He made the claim that all types of Psalms are either in response to, or derived from, the Lament Psalms.⁵⁰ Westermann said that the Lament Psalms express the basic moves of faith from alienation to profound trust, confidence, and gratitude.⁵¹ Brueggemann used Westermann's insight that the literary dynamic of the Psalms gives voice to the dynamics of faith. Brueggemann built on the insights drawn from the work of Claus Westermann.⁵² Using these insights and Gunkel's genres, Brueggemann created three categories that show the movement of life as one prays the Psalms.

Walter Brueggemann

Walter Brueggemann is a modern American Protestant "Old Testament" scholar known for combining literary and sociological methods in reading the Psalms. He combines the Form Critical method, the scholarly study of Psalms and the study of Psalms in informal study groups to develop a comprehensive view of the meaning of the Psalms.

Brueggemann created three categories of Psalms:

- Psalms of Orientation - times of wellbeing.⁵³
- Psalms of Disorientation - times of pain and suffering.⁵⁴
- Psalms of New Orientation – times of discovery and joy; overcoming despair.⁵⁵

This overview can be understood in many different ways. For example, the time before the global pandemic of Covid 19 can be seen as relating to Psalms of Orientation. Psalms of Disorientation relate to dealing with the pandemic and the disruption of “normal” life. Psalms of New Orientation focus on a time after the pandemic. One can see that life is constantly changing. In looking at the Psalms in this way, one can envision a system in which one can move into suffering, through suffering and out of suffering. To Brueggemann, the Psalms are foundation for a life which is lived in connection with the Divine⁵⁶

Psychological Biblical Criticism: Rollins, Freud and Jung

Psychological Biblical Criticism⁵⁷ is an approach to the reading of the Bible that is sensitive to the psychology of the text. Psychology is the study of human behavior, both the external actions and the inner mental processes. It is not a single perspective but has many different approaches and focuses on individual behaviors. Psychological Biblical Criticism looks at the composition and development of the texts, the personalities, themes and relationships that are described in Biblical texts as well as the effects on individual readers that are engaged in sharing, interpreting and engaging with these texts.

In ancient times, psychology (although not called this) was incorporated into sacred texts and in the ways in which they might be understood. For example, there are a number of instances of dream interpretation in the TaNaCh, notably Joseph’s interpretation of the Baker’s⁵⁸ and the Cup Bearer’s⁵⁹ dreams and Pharaoh’s dreams⁶⁰ in the Book of Genesis.

The Cup Bearer dreamed of a vine with three branches that went from bud to mature grapes. He took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup. Joseph interpreted this dream in the following way: that the Cup Bearer would be pardoned in three days and would continue to serve Pharaoh as a Cup Bearer.

The Baker dreamed that he had three baskets. The top one had food for Pharaoh which was being eaten by birds. Joseph interpreted this as follows: in three days Pharaoh would cut off the Baker’s head, impale the Baker and leave him for the birds to eat.

The Pharaoh had two dreams. One was of seven lean cows eating seven healthy cows and the other was that there were seven lean ears of corn that ate seven ears of healthy corn. When Joseph interpreted the dream, he told Pharaoh that there would be seven plentiful years to come but then there would be seven years of famine. The Talmud teaches, “An uninterpreted dream is like an unread letter.”⁶¹

Biblical Psychology originated in the Second Century C.E.⁶² In the Third Century C.E., the Christian theologian Tertulian (150-220 C.E.)⁶³ of Carthage developed Biblical Psychology and also explained the psychology of sleeping and dreaming.

Augustine of Hippo,⁶⁴ a theologian (354-430 C.E.), believed that knowledge of the Divine can be compared to knowledge of the soul. His Biblical Psychology dominated Christian thinking until the 10th century C.E.

In the 1600's, Caspar Bartholinus (1585-1629)⁶⁵ wrote a book called *True Psychology from Sacred Writing*. He identified Genesis 2:7 (the creation of Adam)⁶⁶ as the foundation of true Biblical Psychology.

Franz Delitsch,⁶⁷ a 19th century Lutheran scholar (1813-1890), realized that he could use psychology to provide insight about Biblical texts as well as aiding the understanding of the self.

In the first three quarters of the 20th century, Biblical Psychology fell out of favor⁶⁸ when some scholars attempted to psychoanalyze Jesus.⁶⁹ Other scholars felt that this was mere psychological conjecture that could not be supported by the Gospels.

Wayne G. Rollins (b. 1930)

Wayne G. Rollins, however, felt that Biblical psychology was a useful addition to scholarly methodology. He laid out a systematic argument for why psychological approaches to Biblical texts are essential in modern times⁷⁰ and started a new movement in which Biblical scholars could use psychology for hermeneutical purposes. He showed that using Psychological Biblical Criticism in conjunction with other approaches, i.e., Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism, Feminist Criticism, could offer new insights into the Biblical text. Psychological Biblical Criticism also brings together insights into human behavior, conscious will, one's intention and the critical study of the Bible.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Sigmund Freud was the founder of modern psychotherapy. His work laid the groundwork for considering two other dimensions of the text largely ignored in earlier studies. These are the unconscious as a factor at work in the text and on the reader, and the psychodynamic factors at work in textual narratives and interpretive approaches.⁷¹ According to Freud, there is a possibility of detecting psychodynamic factors at work in the Biblical text and in its interpretation. One may find regression, depression, anxiety, compulsive behavior or obsessive behavior in Biblical texts.⁷²

Carl G. Jung (1875-1961)

Carl Jung was one of the creators of Modern Depth Psychology. This type of psychological analysis seeks to facilitate a conversation with the unconscious. Jung wrote that “Religions are psychotherapeutic systems in the truest sense of the word... They (religions) express the whole range of the psychic problem in mighty images; they are the avowal and recognition of the soul and at the same time a revelation of the soul’s nature.”⁷³ Jung taught that there are psychotherapeutic elements and effects of the Biblical texts. For Jung, the goal of religious texts is the care and cure of our souls.⁷⁴

The Symbolism of the Psalms

Many Psalms use symbolism and imagery to show the complexity of the Psalmist’s feelings. According to psychologist Erich Fromm (1900-1980), “Symbolic language is language in which the world outside is a symbol for the world inside, a symbol for our souls and mind.”⁷⁵

The following Psalms, which form the basis of the technique of Psalm Therapy explored in this project, present a wide variety of symbols related to mental illness. Here are some examples of these symbols. The text for each of these psalms is included in the Appendix of this project.

- Psalm 6. Bones shake with terror suggesting the psalmist’s anxiety and the instability of the life being lead.
- Psalm 22. The psalmist feels like a worm unworthy of Divine attention.
- Psalm 38. Wounds on the psalmist’s body are the outward sign of mental anguish that are being experienced.
- Psalm 42. The lowest depths and the pit show just how much the psalmist is inundated with feelings.
- Psalms 88. The feeling of unrelenting depression is a symbol of the feeling that one has been cut off from everyone, including the Divine.
- Psalm 102. The lone bird on the roof is a symbol of loneliness.

What is Poetry Therapy?

Poetry therapy is a type of expressive therapy that promotes growth and healing through the writing, reading and the discussion of poems.⁷⁶ This poetry can then be used as a vehicle to express one’s inner feelings. Dr. Hirsch Lazaar Silverman, a twentieth century scholar (1915-2014), has found that people turn to poetry for release, hope, comfort, inspiration and as a way to

express their emotions. He also found that when one reads poetry, there are three conditions needed in order for healing to happen:

1. The poem/Psalm must be read in its entirety.
2. The poem/Psalm must be heard and witnessed.
3. The feeling of the poem/Psalm must relate to what the person hearing or reading the poem is actually feeling.⁷⁷

Poetry gives a person a sense that others have been on the same journey and have felt the same feelings. It can also help to make an emotional disorder easier to bear. Poetry can boost flagging spirits through encouragement and hopeful examples and can help to establish a sense of community.⁷⁸ Writing poetry is a way to express one's deepest feelings. Reading poetry provides room for self-reflection. When one reads the Psalms (poetry) one brings one's own needs, feelings and problems to the reading experience. Poetry can then serve as a way to face the conflict within⁷⁹ as well as to free and calm the turbulent feelings of depression.⁸⁰ Poetry Therapy encourages one to explore one's feelings, feel more deeply and to extend one's emotional range.

Poetry Therapy in Ancient Times

In ancient times, shamans and other healers used an early form of Poetry Therapy. They would write poems for a particular illness on papyrus. Then they would submerge the poem in water and have the patient drink the water.⁸¹ We see the early use of Poetry Therapy in the Bible. In I Samuel 16:18-23, the shepherd David is called to the bedside of King Saul to help drive away the evil spirits that would occasionally afflict him. David would play his lyre and sing until King Saul felt better.

Poetry Therapy in Modern Times

Modern Poetry Therapy was initiated in the 1960's by the pharmacist, poet and lawyer Eli Grier (1900-1966) who is credited with giving Poetry Therapy its name.⁸² He worked with the psychiatrist Dr. Jack Leedy (1921-2004) to create the first Poetry Therapy group. When Grier died Leedy continued to work on this therapeutic approach. In 1980, with Dr. Leedy on the board, The National Association of Poetry Therapy was formed.

Why Use Psalms as a Therapeutic Tool?

The Psalms reflect the difficulties of existence, the struggles to remain faithful and the overcoming of doubt and despair.⁸³ According to Dominick Hankel, author of "The Therapeutic

Implications of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Christian Counseling Setting,” the Psalms “... lend themselves nicely to emotional expression, they are an excellent vehicle for resolving emotional stress leading to psychological and spiritual benefits.”⁸⁴ Only in this way may mental and emotional wholeness be obtained.

Introducing the Guide for Using Psalms as a Therapeutic Tool

The next section of this project presents a guide for practitioners on how to use Psalms as a therapeutic tool. The Guide is designed to be used by Pastoral Counselors, Clergy, Chaplains, Social Workers and Therapists. In theory, any type of poetry or any Psalm might provide good material for a particular client. However, just as Rebbe Nachman believed that certain Psalms would be helpful as a healing focus, specific Psalms have been chosen for this project. The Psalms that were chosen relate to specific clinical diagnoses as found in the DSM5 (Diagnostic Statistical Manual 5th edition). The Psalms presented in the Guide are Psalms 6, 22, 23, 38, 42, 88, 102, 126, 131 and 142.

Summary

This project looks at how the Book of Psalms can be used in helping individuals who are on a healing journey. The Psalms can be used to reassure one who suffers that there are others who have also suffered. While many Psalms can offer comfort, there are certain Psalms that give a focused voice to complex feelings. Guided Psalm/poetry dialogue experienced in a therapeutic setting can help a person in growth and healing. This project offers both an academic and practical approach to the use of Psalms in therapeutic healing.

¹ Numbers 12:13. JPS translation

² Kristin M. Swenson, *Living through Pain: Psalms and the Search for Wholeness* (Place of publication not identified: Baylor University Press, 2011), 219.

³ Simkha Y. Weintraub, *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body: Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength & Solace in Psalms* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2002), 46.

⁴ Viviva Colorsheets et al., “Kintsugi: The Centuries-Old Art of Repairing Broken Pottery with Gold,” *My Modern Met*, September 9, 2019, <https://mymodernmet.com/kintsugi-kintsukuroi/>.

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¹⁵ **Psalm 6:8** Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping. **Matthew 7:23** Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ and **Luke 13:27** “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers! (All verses taken from the NIV Bible)

¹⁶ **Psalm 22:1** My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? Both **Matthew 27:46** and **Mark 15:34** About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli,   lemasabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”)

¹⁷ **Psalm 22:7** All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. **Matthew 27:39** Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads. **Mark 15:29** those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads...

¹⁸ **Psalm 22:8** He trusts in the LORD,” they say, “let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.” **Matthew 27:43** He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ”

¹⁹ **Psalm 22:18** They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. **Matthew 27:35** When they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments by casting lots. **Mark 15:24** And they crucified Him. They also divided His garments by casting lots to decide what each of them would take. **Luke 23:34** Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up His garments by casting lots. **John 19:24** So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it. Instead, let us cast lots to see who will get it.” This was to fulfill the Scripture: “They divided My garments among them and cast lots for My clothing.”

²⁰ **Psalm 42:5** Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. **Matthew 26:38** Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” **Mark 14:34** “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

²¹ **Psalm 88:8** You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; **Luke 23:49** But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

²² **Psalm 91:11-12** 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; 12 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. **Matthew 4:6** “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

²³ **Psalm 110:10** The Lord says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. **Luke 2:42-43** 42 David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand 43 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” ’.

²⁴ **Psalm 118:22-23** 22 The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; 23 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. **Mark 12:10-11** 10 Have you never read this Scripture: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 11 This is from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes’.

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A New Guide to Psalm Therapy: The Healing Use of Psalms

הִזְרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה בְּרִגְהָ יִקְצְרוּ

“They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy” (Psalm 126:5).

Introduction

Why is this Guide Being Offered?

There are times when life is messy and an individual suffers as a result. When one does the work of healing, one can find that suffering and pain are the foundation of a new life.

This Guide is for practitioners who help such people. There are many different approaches to helping people who are in pain. This particular approach – Psalm Therapy - is somewhat new. It is modeled on Poetry Therapy, which only began to gain attention in the 1960's.

This Guide brings together the beauty of the ancient words of the Book of Psalms with modern therapeutic techniques. This Guide was created so that the healing practitioner can help a client on his or her healing journey. Kristin M. Swenson, the author of *Living Through Pain: Psalms and the Search for Wholeness* comments, "... there is something sacred in the wholeness of a person, and that healing is the process of integrating experiences..."¹

General Introduction to the Book of Psalms

The Book of Psalms is a book of beautiful poetry from the TaNaCh (Old Testament.) Written over 2500 years ago, this book still speaks to us today. Even though the Psalms were originally part of the Jewish Biblical Cannon, they were embraced by the Christian Church. Many of the themes of the Psalms are universal. They present the entire human experience.² As will be seen, what goes on in the Psalms is quite in touch with what is going on in life itself.

What Resources Will Be Found in This Guide to Psalm Therapy?

This Guide offers a list of questions and answers that a practitioner may contemplate when considering the use of Psalm Therapy. There is material to help the practitioner consider the use of God language within the Psalms. Also included in this Guide is a section on how to get started and how to develop the sessions.

Why Use Psalms in a Therapeutic Setting?

The Book of Psalms addresses a person's basic spiritual needs and emotions.³ Psalms help one to express feelings and provides words when one doesn't have words. This is an essential step in the healing process.

Questions Related to the Use of Psalm Therapy

Here are some questions to consider when determining if Psalm Therapy is an appropriate tool for an individual practitioner and that practitioner's client.

- **What does the therapist have to gain from adding this tool to the practitioner’s therapeutic tool kit? How does the therapist benefit?**

Psalm Therapy can be seen as new tool in a practitioner’s tool box. This may be helpful with clients for whom other approaches have not been productive. Using a new treatment modality, the practitioner may stimulate the formation of new insights. Being able to try something new with a client, the practitioner may discover a new way of thinking about the emotions the client brings to them.

- **Why Psalms? Why not just poetry?**

Psalms are universal and have been used for over 2500 years to bring comfort to those that are ill or suffering. They are familiar to people and in that familiarity they also find comfort, especially Psalm 23. Poetry tends to be rooted in a particular time and place which may not fit the needs of the client. For poetry, the practitioner needs to be very well versed in the literature and in what are their client’s needs. The Book of Psalms has a limited number of Psalms. There are only 150. Of these 150 Psalms there are a relatively small number that are appropriate for Psalm Therapy. The Practitioner needs to spend less time to become familiar with the Book of Psalms and to be able to use them comfortably.

- **I’m not religious and my clients are not religious, so why would I use a religious text?**

As discussed earlier, although the Psalms were originally part of the Hebrew Bible, they were adopted as part of the Christian Bible because of their universal nature. While they advocate monotheism, they don’t profess a specific religious point of view. There is also something timeless about them because they deal with all of human experience and emotion. Psalms are poems that were adopted from the formal system of poetry seen in other Ancient Near Eastern literature. The Divine language can be modified so as to make the Psalm completely secular.

- **The Psalms are too long, too wordy, and don’t always say what I might like them to say. Can they be made shorter?**

Yes. For example, Psalm 119 is an acrostic. Verses can be chosen according to the client’s name. Reinterpreting the Psalms in this way is one of many different approaches that are applied to Psalms in the Jewish tradition. The Psalms in this Guide are “Mini” versions of specific longer Psalms. It may help to introduce a snippet of a particular Psalm to the client so that the client is not overwhelmed.

- **What if my client or I don't believe in God?**

This need not be a problem. Not every Psalm talks about God. Even those that do so, can be modified. There are a number of ways that secular words can substitute for God names in the Psalms. For example, in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd," the pronoun "You" or the term "The Eternal" might be used. If this is still too close to God language, the words "Higher Power" and "Spirit" might be substituted. A slight rewriting is also possible: "Thank you for being my shepherd." Different terms for God are noted in another section of this Guide.

- **When I use the Psalms, what result am I looking for?**

In each session in which a Psalm is used, there may be more than one result. The practitioner may use this tool not completely knowing what the result will be. The purpose of using Psalms in healing is to create many different healing possibilities. It can be an excellent way to stimulate dialogue, offer a client new language to describe emotions and/or open a doorway to new insights.

- **What happens if my client doesn't relate to any of the Psalms that I choose.**

Psalm Therapy as presented in this guide is much like Poetry Therapy. It is a starting point for the vocalization and exploration of a client's issues. Some clients may be resistant to this type of therapy, but there can be therapeutic benefit in discussing their resistance. Even if one cannot find a Psalm that speaks to the client, it doesn't mean that this type of therapy can't work. The practitioner can try using regular poems or have the person write a personal psalm or poem. Psalm (poetry) Therapy works both with the reading and the writing of poetry.

- **How many Psalms should I use in a session?**

You might wish to prepare two or three, trying one at a time.

- **How many sessions should I devote to this type of therapy?**

In this Guide, three sessions are recommended: the first session is for determining whether or not this approach is acceptable to the client. Assuming that agreement has been reached to move forward, the Psalm is read and discussed in the second session. The third session can be used to follow up. This is not a rigid protocol. More sessions can be used if desired.

Summary

There are obviously many questions that might be explored about the use of Psalm Therapy. The questions and answers presented here are meant as a starting point for a practitioner interested in exploring this therapeutic tool.

A Practitioner's Guide to the Use of a Variety of Terms for God

The Book of Psalms uses several different names for the Divine. In the Jewish Publication Society's (JPS) translation, the word El, Elohim and Elyon are translated as God. The Tetragrammaton (Yud Hey Vav Hey – YHVH), which is God's most personal and holy name in Judaism, is not pronounced as written by Jews. The words "Lord" or "Adonai" (Hebrew) are substituted for YHVH. In Christian translations of the TaNaCh, YHVH it is translated as Lord, Yahweh or Jehovah.

To make the Psalms more accessible to a wide audience, the practitioner should discuss the topic of God language with the client. Here are a variety of options to use if the word "God" or "Lord" is not suitable for a particular client.

- Creator
- Divine
- Eternal
- Goddess
- Higher Power
- Holy One of Blessing
- Mighty One
- The One
- The Presence
- Shechinah (Female manifestation of God that is a nurturing presence)
- The Source
- Source of Strength or Source of Life
- Spirit
- Ya (As in Halleluya – Hebrew)

Different religions may have different terms for the word God. In Islam, the word Allah is the proper and personal name of the Almighty Lord, the Creator and Master.⁴ Christians have a variety of ways to reference God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Jesus, Yahweh and Jehovah are just a few.

Possible Questions for the Practitioner to Use to Decide What God Language Will Make the Client Comfortable with the Psalms.

1. What are your thoughts about the word God?
2. Do you believe in God?
3. Does the word God or other terms for a Higher Power make you uncomfortable?
4. Do you believe in the God of organized religion or of spirituality? Or both? Or neither?
5. If you are not comfortable with the term God, do you believe in something greater than yourself?
6. Do you have a name for that something greater than yourself? (Present terms in the Practitioner's Guide to the Use of a Variety of Terms for God) (See above.)

Gender Language and Attention to Gender Identification Issues

Traditional translations of the Book of Psalms use male gender language for God. It is important to discuss with the client the issue of the anthropomorphism of God. Also, of concern is how the client feels about the gendering of God. In the Psalms, it is possible to use non-gendered God language, traditional male God language, female God language or non-binary God language.

Introduction to the Mini Psalm

The Psalms can be lengthy and complex. In using the entire Psalms for Psalm Therapy, this may make it difficult for a client to think about what they are feeling. The "Mini Psalm" is a shorter version of an original Psalm that focuses on a particular emotion, healing issue or diagnosis. This is an original creation that was developed by this writer to make the Psalms more accessible for use in a therapeutic setting.

The Mini Psalms that appear in this Guide were created to represent symptoms of a diagnosis from the DSM5. Each of the original Psalms was categorized according to various DSM5 diagnoses. These Psalms can be used in several different diagnoses. However, they were assigned to a specific diagnosis as an example of the many ways in which the Mini Psalms can be used.

Psalms 6, 22, 23, 38, 42, 88, 102, 126, 131 and 142 were chosen for this Guide. Using these Psalms is one approach to healing with the Psalms. Another way of using Psalms for healing was created by Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.⁵ He believed that there are ten specific Psalms that made

up *Tikkun HaKlali*, (The General Remedy). Those Psalms are Psalms 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137 and 150. Practitioners should feel free to use Psalms that they think will work.

How Does One Start Using Psalm Therapy

For the practitioner interested in using Psalm (Poetry) Therapy with clients, what follows is a step by step guide to getting started. In this Guide there are a number of Psalms that have been selected for use. They were selected because they offer clear symptoms of illness as seen in the DSM5. The Psalms have been shortened into Mini Psalms so that they offer an easy way for the client to relate to them.

To use the Psalms as part of counseling, one needs to consider certain things. What term for the Divine might be most appropriate for the client? What outcome from the use of this technique is desired? What other possible outcomes might result?

How to Use Psalm Therapy

Introduction

It is suggested that the practitioner set aside a minimum of three sessions for the use of Psalm Therapy.

1. Think of what you want to get out of the sessions, for example a conversation on a topic that until now the client has been unable to voice. Think about what would work well for the client.
2. Prepare two or three Psalms that are close to the feeling of the mood of the client coming in. For example, according to Poetry Therapy, depressed patients are helped by Psalms that are sad and gloomy yet having verses that reflect hope and optimism⁶. Choose a Psalm that encourages the client to vocalize difficult feelings. Create copies of the Psalm to be used in the session and to take home. (See Mini Psalms at the end of this Guide and the full length Psalms in the Addendum.)
3. The practitioner should have a general idea of how to run the session.
4. Be prepared to follow the client's lead in whatever direction the session may take.
5. Think about how many sessions might be needed. This guide suggests three sessions:

Session 1: Determine the client's willingness to try this type of work.

Session 2: Discuss the chosen Psalm and the client's reactions to the psalm.

Session 3: Review material that presented in Session 2. Discuss and explore other insights.

This might require further sessions.

6. Consider gender issues and God language in choosing a version of the Psalm that will be used. (See section on God language and Gender language.)
7. Use the Psalms with confidence that doing so will yield positive results.

How to Use Psalm Therapy in an Actual Session

Introduction

This is a Guide to running Psalm Therapy sessions.

Session 1

Session 1 introduces the client to this new modality.

- Is the client interested?
- How does the client relate to God language and Gender issues in the Psalms?
- What will make the client most comfortable when interacting with Psalms?
- What outcome of using this modality is desired by the practitioner and by the client?
- Figure out if there are any other changes that are needed to make the Psalms work for the client, i.e. feminist or non-gendered or other gendered language.

Session 2

Session 2 is the meeting in which the practitioner presents the selected Mini Psalm to the client and works with the selected Mini Psalm. The Mini Psalm should be geared to the specific outcome desired by the client and the practitioner.

- The practitioner should have prepared two or three Mini Psalms in case the client is not able to relate to the first Psalm.
- The client should read the Mini Psalm out loud.
- Ask if the Mini Psalm speaks to the client. If the Mini Psalm doesn't resonate with the client try another Psalm.
- The client and practitioner discuss the Mini Psalm, focusing on what the client is able to relate to it or why the client does not relate to the content of the Mini Psalm.
- A conversation may continue relating to other issues sparked by the Mini Psalm.
- The practitioner may give additional material to the client to take home to read and think about.
- Once a client has looked at the Mini Psalm and worked with it, s/he may find that s/he would like to read more of the Mini Psalm. The practitioner may wish to supply the whole Psalm or other materials to the client.

- It may be helpful for the client to keep a journal of things that come with respect to the use of this modality until the next session.

Session 3

Session 3 reflects on what the client has received in the process.

- Read the Psalm aloud to remind the client and the practitioner of the work they did in the last session.
- Has anything come up since the last session that needs to be discussed?
- If the client kept a journal during the week, discuss the journal entries.
- The practitioner might ask if a certain word or phrase was significant and discuss the client's response.
- Explore the idea of posting the meaningful pieces of the Psalm at home.
- If client wishes, the practitioner can provide other Mini Psalms for the client's personal reflection.
- Additional sessions can offer deeper insights, if appropriate.

Conclusion

In this Guide, a new way to use Psalms as part of the therapeutic process has been presented. This is but one approach to the use of Psalms in healing. Healing is a process and a journey that one most often takes with a practitioner.

It is hoped that this Guide can be used as a jumping off point for the use of other Psalms in healing and provide practitioners with a useful new tool to help heal clients who are struggling with emotional illness.

¹ Kristin M. Swenson, *Living through Pain: Psalms and the Search for Wholeness* (Place of publication not identified: Baylor University Press, 2011), 218.

² Jean Calvin and David C. Searle, *Commentary on the Psalms* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), x.

³ Martin S. Rozenberg and Bernard M. Zlotowitz, *The Book of Psalms: a New Translation and Commentary* (Northvale, NJ, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1999), xi.

⁴ Mohammad Masood. Ahmed, *Would You like to Know Something about Islam?: the Time Is Ripe* (Wingdale, NY, NY: Crescent Books Inc., 2011), xiii.

⁵Simkha Y. Weintraub, *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body: Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength & Solace in Psalms* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2002), 17.

⁶Jack J. Leedy, *Poetry as Healer: Mending the Troubled Mind* (New York, NY: Vanguard Press, 1985), 67.

Mini Psalms for Use in Psalm Therapy

וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שָׂתוּל עַל-פְּלִגֵּי מַיִם אֲשֶׁר פֵּרִיו | יִתֵּן בְּעִתּוֹ וְעָלְהוּ לֹא-יִבּוֹל וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה
יִצְלִיחַ:

... like a tree planted beside streams of water which yields its fruit in season, whose foliage never fades, whatever it produces, thrives.(Psalm 1:3)

Introduction

In this section, the practitioner will find ten Mini Psalms for use in Psalm Therapy. Each Psalm has been associated with a diagnosis from the DSM5. The association of a particular Mini Psalm with a specific diagnosis is not meant to be exclusive or limiting. Rather, it is presented as an example of how a Psalm could be used to help a client with a specific diagnosis. Practitioners should feel free to apply any of the Mini Psalms, or any other Psalms to a variety of diagnoses.

The Mini Psalms were created for this Guide from the complete Psalm. The JPS version of the complete Psalms are included in the Addendum. The Mini Psalms were developed as a way of giving the client and the practitioner greater access to the core emotional content of each selected Psalm.

Three different English translations were used to create the Mini Psalms. The translations were chosen to produce a text that was emotionally relatable and could be easily understood. The three translations were JPS (Jewish Publication Society,) NIV (New International Version) and KJV (King James Version.) These and other translations can be found on Biblehub.com.

A synopsis of the content of each Mini Psalm is presented at the beginning of the Psalm. Following each Mini Psalm are suggested reflections for each of the verses presented. These are meant as a starting point for conversation with the client. The richness of Psalms is that there are many different associations and points of view that allow each person to find relevance in the Psalms.

The practitioner should feel free to alter the God language and gender-related language of any of the material presented. For example:

Altering God Language

O LORD, do not punish me in anger. (Psalm 6:2)

Options:

1. Leave this as is.
2. Change Lord to one of the God names shown in The Guide, i.e., Divine, Spirit, Holy One of Blessing, Creator.
3. Remove “O Lord” entirely.

Altering Gender Language

The LORD is my shepherd; (Psalm 23:1.)

I shall not want.

Changing a masculine noun to a non-gendered noun.

The Lord is my protector

Changing gendered pronouns.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;(Psalm 23:2)

He leads me beside quiet waters.

1. Change the gender – i.e., She makes me lie down
2. Change the pronoun – You make me lie down
3. Delete the pronoun – Make me lie down in green pastures; Help me to lie down in...

Beginning on the next page, please find ten Mini Psalms for use in your Psalm Therapy sessions.

Mini Psalms and Their Associated DSM 5 Diagnoses

Anxiety

Inspired by Psalm 6

Synopsis: This Psalm moves from fear to confidence and from anxiety to agency.

Verses from Psalm 6

- 2 O LORD, do not punish me in anger, JPS
or discipline me in Your wrath NIV
- 3 Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am frail;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are in agony. NIV
- 4 My soul is deeply distressed.
How long, O LORD, how long NIV
- 7 I am weary with groaning;
every night I drench my bed,
I melt my couch in tears. NIV
- 8 My eyes are wasted by sorrow,
worn out because of all my foes. JPS
- 10 The LORD has heard my cry for mercy;
the LORD accepts my prayer. NIV

Reflections on the above verses to Psalm 6

- Verse 2 Why am I being punished?
What did I do wrong?
- Verse 3 I am scared.
I am afraid of not being healed.
My mind and body are connected.
This mental anguish is causing me physical pain.
- Verse 7 I have no relief from this anguish.
I am constantly overwhelmed by feelings.
- Verse 8 I feel like this is a bad dream that never ends.
I feel stuck.

My foes are all the things keeping me in this dark place.

Verse 10 I feel like the Divine hears me.

I feel like the Divine is with me.

Even though I am struggling, I feel that I can still reach out to the Divine.

Depression

Inspired by Psalm 22

Synopsis: Feeling abandoned by the world and reaching to the Divine to becoming part of the Community.

Verses from Psalm 22

- 2 My God, my God,
 why have You abandoned me;
 why so far from delivering me
 and from my anguished roaring? JPS
- 3 I cry out by day, O my God,
 but You do not answer,
 and by night,
 but I have no rest. NIV
- 7 But I am a worm, less than human;
 scorned by men, despised by people JPS
- 8 All who see me mock me;
 they sneer and shake their heads: NIV
- 12 Do not be far from me,
 for trouble is near,
 and there is none to help JPS
- 15 I am poured out like water,
 and all my bones are disjointed.
 My heart is like wax;
 it melts away within me. NIV
- 16 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
 and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.
 You lay me in the dust of death. NIV
- 20 But You, O LORD, be not far off;
 O my Strength, come quickly to help me. NIV
- 23 I will proclaim Your name to my brothers;
 I will praise You in the assembly. NIV

Reflections on the above verses of Psalm 22

- Verse 2 I feel like I have lost the presence of the Divine.
I am overwhelmed by feelings.
With so many feelings, is there room for the Divine presence.
I have to believe that the Divine is always with me even when I don't feel the
Divine's presence.
- Verse 3 Will this darkness ever end?
Will I ever feel better?
- Verse 7 I feel unworthy of love, the Divine's, or anyone else's.
I feel isolated from my community.
What is wrong with me?
- Verse 8 I already feel miserable now the darkness is mocking me telling me I am no good.
This makes me feel even more isolated from the community.
- Verse 12 I can only trust in the Divine to help.
There is no one to turn to but the Divine.
There is no person that is willing to try and help me.
- Verse 15 These dark thoughts are manifesting into a physical illness.
This will never get better.
- Verse 16 I think death is preferable to this suffering.
Is there any meaning to this suffering?
Do I really need to sit in the dust in order to find new life and insights on life?
- Verse 20 In the Divine I find strength in the times that I struggle.
I pour my thoughts out to the Divine because I need these thoughts out of my
mind.
These thoughts will not get better if I can not speak them aloud.
- Verse 23 Once I have poured my heart out to the Divine there will be room for the Divine
presence to come in.
I can help others through the struggles of life, so they won't have to suffer as I
have.

Grief (Comfort)

Psalm 23

Synopsis: Movement into, through and out of the dark place.

Psalm 23

1 The LORD is my shepherd;

I shall not want. KJV

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters. KJV

3 He refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake. NIV

4 Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness,

I fear no harm, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me. JPS

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. KJV

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever. NIV

Reflections on Psalm 23

Verse 1 I believe in the idea that the Divine will come to my aid.
Please bring me comfort in this difficult time, Divine.

Verse 2 I can find quiet in being with the Divine.

Verse 3 I need help doing this.

Verse 4 Even through this difficult time, I know that the Divine
will hold my hand through it.

Verses 5 I will come through this difficult time a stronger person.

Verse 6 I will always remember this event that has changed my life.
Through this difficult time, I can find new ways to look at life.

Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome

Inspired by Psalm 38

Synopsis: I seem to be reliving this experience over and over. Where is God?

Verses from Psalm 38

6 My wounds stink and fester because of my folly.	JPS
7 I am all bent and bowed; I walk about in gloom all day long.	JPS
8 For my loins are full of burning pain, and no soundness remains in my body.	KJV
9 I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart.	NIV
14 But like a deaf man, I do not hear; and like a mute man, I do not open my mouth.	KJV
15 I am like a man who cannot hear, whose mouth offers no reply	KJV
16 But I wait for You, O LORD; You will answer, O Lord, my God.	JPS
22 Do not abandon me, O LORD; my God, be not far from me;	JPS
23 Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Savior.	KJV

Reflections on Psalm 38:

- Verse 6 I feel like my mind has wreaked havoc on my body.
What did I do wrong?
Is it something I can fix?
- Verse 7 These negative feelings never seem to go away.
These negative feelings weigh heavily on my mind.
- Verse 8 I feel like this mental anguish is taking over my life.
There doesn't feel like there is an escape or help for the way I feel.

- Verse 9 I keep reliving the same event over and over again.
I am isolated and it has an impact on my mind.
How can I make this better for me?
- Verse 14 I am having trouble putting my feelings into words.
I feel as if I am unable to connect with those around me.
- Verse 15 How do I heal If I can't verbalize how I am feeling?
I am feeling dumb.
- Verse 16 I would love to be able to talk to someone, but no one wants to listen.
I will turn to the Divine and air my feelings with the Divine
- Verse 22 As I reach to You please let me know You are there.
Divine please hold my hand as I struggle.
- Verse 23 I will trust in the Divine to bring me the strength I need to heal.
I can hope that the Divine has heard me and will give me an answer.

Depression

Inspired by Psalm 42

Synopsis: Seeking the Divine and feeling the emotions of life.

Verses from Psalm 42

2 Like a hind crying for water,

my soul cries for You, O God; JPS

3 My soul thirsts for God, the living God.

When shall I come and appear in God's presence? KJV

5 These things I remember

as I pour out my soul:

how I used to go to the house of God

under the protection of the Mighty One

with shouts of joy and praise

among the festive throng. NIV

8 Deep calls to deep

in the roar of your waterfalls;

all your waves and breakers

have swept over me. NIV

9 The LORD decrees His loving devotion by day,

and at night His song is with me

as a prayer to the God of my life KJV

10 I say to God my Rock,

“Why have You forgotten me?

Why must I walk in sorrow

because of the enemy's oppression?” KJV

Reflections on psalm 42

Verse 2 In the depths I yearn for my connection with the Divine.

I will continue to reach for the Divine.

Verse 3 I want to feel the Divine's presence again.

What can I do to recapture the feeling of the Divine presence?

- Verse 5 I remember the times that I felt the Divine presence and wish for it to return.
I am remembering the spiritually vibrant experience I have had and now I am
having a hard time readjusting to normal life.
I will tell the Divine all that is in my soul so I can voice these thoughts that are
running around in my mind.
I remember the times I felt as if I was part of the community, now I feel alone with
the Divine as my only friend.
- Verse 8 I am overwhelmed by all these feelings.
I am having trouble being present.
There is no other option but to deal with this right now.
- Verse 9 I keep fighting these emotions because I believe the Divine will help me heal.
I continue to pray in the hopes that the Divine will help me.
- Verse 10 I believe that the Divine is always with me.
I don't feel the presence of the Divine because I am overwhelmed by feelings.
Is there a reason I am suffering so?
Is there a purpose to this suffering that I don't understand?

Unrelenting Depression

Inspired by Psalm 88

Synopsis: Even when there is only dark, prayer can bring a bit of hope.

Verses from Psalm 88

- 2 LORD, you are the God who saves me;
day and night I cry out to you. NIV
- 3 May my prayer come before you;
turn your ear to my cry. NIV
- 4 For my soul is full of troubles, KJV
- 7 You have put me in the lowest pit,
in the darkest depths. NIV
- 10 My eyes grow dim with grief.
I call to You daily, O LORD;
I spread out my hands to You. KJV
- 14 As for me, I cry out to You, O LORD;
each morning my prayer greets You JPS
- 15 Why, O LORD, do You reject me,
do You hide Your face from me? JPS
- 19 You have removed my beloved and my friend;
darkness is my closest companion. KJV

Reflections on Psalm 88

- Verse 2 Where are You?
I need You.
I don't understand why I feel this way.
- Verse 3 I continue to pray in the hope that You will answer me.
Do You hear the pain I am in?
- Verse 4 I can't seem to find my way out of this darkness I find myself in.
What did I do wrong to cause me to be stuck in this state?
- Verse 7 I constantly think that death is the answer.
Is there a purpose to this suffering?

Will someone help me.

Will You help me?

I don't know that I can do this.

Verse 10 Please hear me out of these depths and help me.

Please be a light in this darkness.

I am tired of living this way.

Verse 14 I continue to reach out to You with the hope that You will bring me what I need

(not necessarily what I want).

I hide nothing as I pour out my soul to You.

Verse 15 I guess I am going to have to sit in the darkness for a bit.

Is it possible that I can find new insights from sitting in the darkness?

Is it possible that out of my darkness I can help others
that sit in the darkness as well.

Verses 19 I feel lonely and isolated from everyone and now You too.

I counted on You to help me, where are you?

Why is this happening?

I continue to feel as if You are not there.

I live my life in the dark.

Abandonment and Loneliness

Inspired by Psalm 102

Synopsis: When one feels abandoned and lonely, don't give up.

Verses from psalm 102

2 O LORD, hear my prayer;

let my cry come before You. JPS

3 Do not hide your face from me

when I am in distress.

Turn your ear to me;

when I call, answer me quickly. NIV

8 I lie awake; I am like

a lone bird upon a roof. JPS

12 My days are like a lengthening shadow;

I wither like grass. JPS

13 But You, O LORD, are enthroned forever;

Your fame endures throughout the ages. JPS

18 He will respond to the prayer of the destitute;

He will not despise their plea. NIV

19 May this be written down for a coming generation,

that people yet to be created may praise the LORD JPS

Reflections on Psalm 102

Verse 2 Where are You?

Please hear me.

I am in pain.

Verse 3 Please answer me.

I need Your help.

Can You help me now, please?

Verse 8 I am all alone.

I am lonely.

There is no one to help ease this pain.

- Verse 12 I feel like I am dying.
Is death preferable to the loneliness?
- Verse 13 I feel finite in comparison to the Eternal You.
I remember other times You have helped me.
- Verse 18 You have answered other people's prayers, why not mine?
The Divine hears all our cries.
- Verse 19 Can I apply my own feelings to that of the community?
Is there something I can leave for the generations to come.
Can I help others in a similar situation?

Abandonment

Psalm 142

Synopsis: I am alone in this world. I turn to the only One who is there for me.

Psalm 142

1 A maskil of David, while he was in the cave.

A prayer. JPS

2 I cry aloud to the LORD;

I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. NIV

3 I pour out my complaint before Him;

I lay my trouble before Him JPS

4 when my spirit fails within me.

You know my course;

they have laid a trap in the path I walk. JPS

5 Look and see, there is no one at my right hand;

no one is concerned for me.

I have no refuge;

no one cares about me. NIV

6 So I cry to You, O LORD;

I say, "You are my refuge,

all I have in the land of the living." JPS

7 Listen to my cry,

for I am in desperate need;

rescue me from those who pursue me,

for they are too strong for me. NIV

8 Free me from prison,

that I may praise Your name.

The righteous shall glory in me

for Your gracious dealings with me. JPS

Reflections on Psalm 142

- Verse 2 Where are You?
 Please help me.
 I don't know what to do.
- Verse 3 I am honest with the Divine about my troubles.
 I don't hide how I am feeling from the Divine.
 There is no one else who will listen to me.
- Verse 4 I leave my life in the Divine's hands.
 I don't know what else to do.
- Verse 5 I am alone in this world.
 I am lonely.
 Being alone makes living difficult.
 I can't find any comfort.
 Where are You?
- Verse 6 The only way to find peace and comfort is to believe the Divine is with me and
 listening to me.
- Verse 7 I can't do this alone.
 Please help me as I don't know how to handle the situation.
- Verse 8 Divine, You help me escape the darkness that has been haunting me.
 I will pray when the darkness is gone.
 I realize that the Divine has helped in this situation.

Healing

Psalm 126

Synopsis: A return from a sense of isolation to becoming part of the community again.

Psalm 126

1 A song of ascents.

When the LORD restores the fortunes of Zion

—we see it as in a dream—

JPS

2 our mouths shall be filled with laughter,
our tongues, with songs of joy.

Then shall they say among the nations,

“The LORD has done great things for them!”

JPS

3 The LORD will do great things for us
and we shall rejoice.

JPS

4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like watercourses in the Negeb

JPS

5 Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy

NIV

6 Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

NIV

Reflections on Psalm 126

Verse 1 I made it through the mess.

It still doesn't feel as if this is real.

Verse 2 I believed in the Divine and look where I am now.

Laughter and joy are something I haven't felt in a while.

Verse 3 The Divine does heal everything.

Verse 4 It was as if my soul was in a desert and the Divine brought it water.

Verse 5 I have reached the depths of despair and now are being shown the heights of joy.

Verse 6 I have dreamed of seeing my life restored to good health, now it is a reality.

Healing

Psalm 131

Synopsis: Being in a good space after emotional turmoil.

Psalm 131

1 A song of ascents. Of David.

O LORD, my heart is not proud

nor my look haughty;

I do not aspire to great things

or to what is beyond me; JPS

2 but I have taught myself to be contented

like a weaned child with its mother;

like a weaned child am I in my mind. JPS

3 Israel, put your hope in the LORD

both now and forevermore. NIV

Reflections on Psalm 131

Verse 1 I have worked hard to heal and I am happy with where I am.

I have continued to believe in the Divine.

Verse 2 Life is ok for now.

Verse 3 I will always be grateful for the Divine's help in my healing.

Survey of Practitioners

פִּי יִדְבַר חֵכְמָוֹת וְהִגִּיתִּי לִבִּי תְבוּנָוֹת:

My mouth utters wisdom, my speech is full of insight. (Psalm 49:4)

Reflections on Responses to this Guide from Four Healing Practitioners

The Guide with a questionnaire was sent to four different practitioners for the purpose of determining whether a professional would find this material comprehensible and of use. The readers were asked to comment on a variety of issues related to the Guide. The compiled data appears at the end of this section of the project.

The readers were:

Practitioner 1 - a rabbi with pastoral care experience who worked with a community in Pennsylvania.

Practitioner 2 - a well-established practicing psychoanalytic psychotherapist, a graduate of the Karen Horney Psychoanalytic Institute, with a practice in the New York area.

Practitioner 3 - an established licensed social worker with a practice in Massachusetts.

Practitioner 4 - a Biblical scholar and rabbi of a congregation in Pennsylvania.

The responses helped to point out specific areas in which the original text of the Guide needed to be refined. One of the responses was very valuable in thinking about how the Guide might be expanded into a book. Other responses helped to indicate sections of the text that were on target, while others brought focus to areas that needed to be worked on.

One suggestion that was quite interesting and helpful was the concept that each Psalm can be used for several diagnoses, not just the ones suggested in the project. Another insight was the suggestion that a client could use the Mini Psalms and the reflections as an introduction to writing the client's own Psalms. In my opinion, the client can start the healing process by reading about another's experience. It is the response to the writing that helps in the healing.

One of the readers noted that the Mini Psalms can be used to validate a client's feelings. Another reader commented that the Mini Psalms show that others have felt the same way. Reader 2 noted that although she was not comfortable with this modality, she recognized its possible use. She commented that she could see herself using Psalm Therapy if a client asked for this type of approach. This is one way that a practitioner can help a client.

The reflections after each Mini Psalm seemed to be helpful to several readers. One suggestion was that the reflections on the Mini Psalms are helpful in locating specific emotional content to help the client. Other feedback suggested that the Mini Psalms are a reminder of a shared human experience. The Psalms can also help the client look beyond the DSM5 diagnosis by thinking about the wider emotional experience reflected in those texts.

Psalm Therapy has the potential to be a practical and therapeutically rewarding modality for therapeutic practitioners. The people who reviewed the Guide presented in this project opened up new and interesting avenues to explore in the future should I wish to explore this further.

Data Compiled from Survey of Practitioners

(Names used with permission.)

Practitioner 1 - a rabbi with pastoral care experience who worked with a Jewish community in Pennsylvania.

Practitioner 2 - an established licensed practicing psychoanalytic psychotherapist, a graduate of the Karen Horney Psychoanalytic Institute, with a practice in the New York area.

Practitioner 3 - an established licensed social worker with a practice in Massachusetts.

Practitioner 4 - a Biblical scholar and rabbi of a congregation in Pennsylvania.

This is a compilation of the raw data based on the questionnaire about The Guide.

QUESTIONNAIRE

PSALM THERAPY:

THE PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC USE OF PSALMS:

THE GUIDE

Please read The Guide and then respond to the following questions in as much or as little detail as you feel is appropriate.

1. Do you use a particular type of therapeutic technique in your counseling practice?

Yes No Please explain.

- Practitioner 1: No. In my pastoral counseling, I try to use whatever method the client (i.e., congregant) would find most comfortable.
- Practitioner 2: Yes. I use a psychoanalytic psychotherapy approach.
- Practitioner 3: Yes. I primarily approach my work through two models. One framework I find useful is a mindfulness and values-based model called ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy), and the other is IFS (Internal Family Systems), which focuses on understanding, integrating and healing the wounded and reactive parts of the self.
- Practitioner 4: No. I do not have a counseling practice.

2. Have you ever used Psalms or Poetry Therapy in your work with clients?

Yes No Please explain.

- Practitioner 1: No. I have made reference to the Psalms during counseling, such as suggesting reading the book of Psalms as a meditative practice, but I have not used them in any systematic way.
- Practitioner 2: No.
- Practitioner 3: No. As above.

3. Do you think you would like to try this type of therapy with selected clients?

Yes No Please explain.

- Practitioner 1: Yes. What I find appealing about this approach is that the client can see that they are not alone in their fears and that others have felt the same way. This is one of the most important insights that suffering individuals need to realize.
- Practitioner 2: Yes. I would try this approach if a client suggests it. I believe in following a client's style and patterns of exploring their internal and external lives. To establish a trusting and therapeutic relationship, I need to familiarize myself, understand as well as I can a client's approach to their lives, their patterns, their ways of solving and making sense of life's challenges. If this exploration leads to psalms, I would be grateful to have been asked to review Ms. Grodenchik's Master's Project. Having started to develop an understanding of a method I was not unfamiliar with.
- Practitioner 3: No. I would not be interested in using this approach because it appears to rely on finding healing from another's experience, as in the writer of the Psalm, rather than one's own lived experience. I do not find it effective to argue or persuade in therapy. I do like the idea of exploring ideas and investigating the client's response to a piece of writing.
- Practitioner 4: Yes. Although I don't practice therapy, I can see that this material might help some people get through tough times.

Having read The Guide, please respond to the following questions.

4. Is there enough information in the Guide for a practitioner to implement this therapy?

Yes No Please explain.

- Practitioner 1: Yes. The step by step process for utilizing the Psalms is very clearly spelled out for the practitioner, so that they know how to make this therapy effective.
- Practitioner 2: Yes. The Guide seems to give enough information to start to implement this approach. Not being familiar with psalms and not having used poetry therapy, I don't feel comfortable to introduce this approach with a client. But as the guide recommends, 'Be prepared to follow the client's lead in whatever direction the session may take.' So, if a client suggests psalms as a channel '... to vocalize difficult feelings.' I would be referring to "The Guide" for direction.
- Practitioner 3: No. The reflections are useful as they expand the concepts in a common, relatable, universal language and the categories of emotional states are useful as the practitioner can locate a verse that may fit the client's experience. However, many psychological experiences are more complex than listed in Psalms. Also, the Guide does not offer guidance for how to respond to clients whose experience does not match that of the author of the Psalm. What the Guide offers that is helpful is a reminder of shared common human experience. When one sees one's own feelings and truth in another's writing, one may feel a fundamental sense of validation and feeling less alone. However, that is often not enough for healing. One may need to investigate one's personal experience, one's patterns of thought, feeling, reaction and behavior through different strategies for the sake of behavioral change.
- Practitioner 4: Yes. For a person who has already been trained in psychotherapy, the material appears to present a straightforward and very useful roadmap.

5. Do the three sessions flow well, as written? Yes No Please explain.

- Practitioner 1: Yes.
- Practitioner 2: Yes, I appreciate the sensitivity to the client's needs and pace during a session.
- Practitioner 3: Yes.

- Practitioner 4: Yes. In the hands of a trusted therapist, these sessions would doubtless flow well and help the client reach the desired goals.

6. Do you find that each Mini Psalm speaks to the labeled diagnosis? (See Glossary for definitions of terms.) __Yes __No Please explain.

- Practitioner 1: Yes, although I think that sometimes the biblical language is a bit vague and might be representative of more than one diagnosis.
- Practitioner 2: Yes. These psalms give depth and universality to our feelings by their timelessness. They help us question our limited way of using diagnoses. I appreciate the synopsis of each psalm, the trajectory from fear and suffering to hope.
- Practitioner 3: Yes. At the same time, I believe it is important to offer psychoeducation around a range of symptoms associated with a diagnosis and to examine the function of the symptoms, the reason they have been activated as a defense mechanism or a protection of a wounded part. For example, while certain psalms express symptoms often associated with PTSD, it is important to explain the neuroscience of brain functioning, how reactions such as dissociation or hypervigilance are mechanisms of survival from the past and how they may interfere with engagement of the prefrontal cortex and awareness of the present.
- Practitioner 4: Yes. Being unfamiliar with DSM5, I wasn't sure whether you were going to cite a page or designation number or what. I deduce that labels such as Anxiety or Depression are what you mean by the DSM5 diagnoses.

7. Are the reflections helpful? Would they be useful as a guide for dialogue with a client? __Yes __No Please explain.

- Practitioner 1: Yes. Very helpful! They can serve to help the client reflect on their own feelings while reading the Psalm and can help “translate” the Psalmist’s fears and concerns into those of the client.
- Practitioner 2: Yes. I think they help the client and therapist question the rigid wall that surrounds a painful emotional state.
- Practitioner 3: Yes. I would continually invite the client to notice reactions, making room for resistance, disinterest or alienation from the text. I would ask the client how the client feels when reading the psalms, inquiring if there is a response in the body, for example, if there is constricting or opening, tightening or expanding.

- Practitioner 4: Yes. The reflections are themselves models of psalms that a client might use in writing original pieces, using newly found words to convey deeply felt emotions

8. In looking at The Guide as a whole, is there anything that seems to be missing?

- Practitioner 1: I would like to suggest adding one or two celebratory Psalms at the end, rather than ending chronologically with Psalm 142. These Psalms could be used at the conclusion of therapy to represent the client's return to joy and hope.
- Practitioner 2: I am not sure. I don't feel equipped to answer this question since this approach is new to me. I appreciated reading Ms. Grodenchik's Master's Project. She helped me think about our ancestors' emotional struggles, these universal emotional struggles that we in the present force into tidy diagnostic categories. Thank you.
- Practitioner 3: I would acknowledge that there are diagnoses that are not described in the Psalms.

Glossary

אֲשַׁכֵּילְךָ | וְאֹרְךָ בְּדַרְכֵי-צְדָקָה אֶעְצָה עֲלֶיךָ עֵינָי:

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. (Psalm 32:8)

Clinical depression is an illness that requires treatment. Clinical depression is diagnosed as a depressed mood lasting more than two weeks that interferes with daily life. It also presents with five or more of the following symptoms:

- Diminished interest in things. --Weight gain or loss.
- Decrease/ increase in appetite. -- Insomnia/ hypersomnia.
- Psycho motor agitation/ retardation. -- Fatigue/ loss of energy.
- Feeling of worthlessness. -- Excessive/ inappropriate guilt.
- Diminished ability to think/concentrate. -- Suicidal ideation.

Documentary Hypothesis⁶

The Documentary Hypothesis is the idea that the TaNaCh was composed by four different authors. These four authors were labeled J (Jahwist), E (Elohistic), D (Deuteronomist) and P (Priestly). These are dated from approximately 950 B.C.E to the 5th century B.C.E.. Julius Wellhausen was the author of the Documentary Hypothesis.

Expressive Therapy⁷

Expressive therapy combines psychology and the creative process to promote emotional growth and healing.

Feminist Criticism⁸

Feminist Criticism is concerned with "the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women." Feminist criticism is also concerned with less obvious forms of marginalization such as the exclusion of women writers from the traditional literary canon.

Form Criticism⁹

Form Criticism is a critical research methodology that seeks to understand ancient texts—especially the Bible—by giving careful attention to their “forms,” that is, the typical genres of verbal and written discourse. At its heart, Form Criticism is one of comparison, in which texts (or parts of texts) are better understood when read alongside similar texts.

Gemara¹⁰ (Completion)¹¹

The Gemara is the Rabbinic discussion and interpretation of the Mishna which is written in Aramaic. The Gemara was put together in a manner that places generations of sages in conversation with one another. It provides proof texts for known laws and explains the difference

between the Biblical law and Rabbinic interpretation. It introduces connections between Biblical texts, practices, legal opinions and non-Biblical stories.

The Gospels¹²

The Gospels are the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These books cover the life and death of Jesus.

Halakhah

Halakhah is the Hebrew term for the overall body of Jewish law.

Healing¹³

Healing is not necessarily a cure. In Judaism healing has two components, body and soul (spirit). Healing of body means finding a cure. Healing of spirit involves creating a pathway to a sense of wholeness and peace. The dictionary definition is the process in which a bad situation or painful emotion improves.¹⁴

Hermeneutics¹⁵

Hermeneutics is the science of Biblical interpretation. There are many ways that the Bible can be read and they each have their own method, i.e. Historical Criticism, Form Criticism and Psychological Biblical Criticism.

Hitbodedut¹⁶

Hitbodedut is translated as “seclusion.” In rabbinic literature, it refers to meditation. The practice of Hitbodedut was championed by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810.) In his writings, Rabbi Nachman taught that one should set aside time every day to talk aloud with God.¹⁷

Jesus

The Christians have different names for God: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Many Christian teachings present Jesus as God’s son.

JPS¹⁸

The Jewish Publication Society. This terminology is commonly used for the English translation of the Hebrew text. The JPS translation is an entirely original translation of the Holy Scriptures into contemporary English, based on the original Masoretic (traditional Hebrew) text. The translators made use of the entire range of Biblical interpretation, ancient and modern, Jewish and non-Jewish. The resulting text is a triumph of literary style and Biblical scholarship, unsurpassed in accuracy and clarity.¹⁹

Kabbalah²⁰

Kabbalah is the term applied to all of Jewish Mysticism. The foundational book for the practice of *Kabbalah* is called The Zohar.

Kavanah²¹

Kavanah is the Hebrew word for direction, intention, or purpose. In its simplest meaning, it refers to concentrating the mind in the performance of a religious act, ensuring that it doesn't devolve into rote, mechanical action. It is most commonly associated with concentration and intention in Jewish prayer, but the concept of *kavanah* applies to all mitzvot.

KJV²²

King James Version of the Bible - TaNaCh and New Testament. The King James Version of the Bible was published in 1611. This rendering of the Bible was more faithful to the original languages of the Bible. It quickly became the standard for excellence in English translations of the Bible and made a tremendous impact on Western civilization and Culture.

Mini Psalm

The term “Mini Psalm” has been coined for this Guide. The “Mini Psalm” is a shorter version of an original Psalm that focuses on a particular emotion, healing issue or diagnosis. This is an original creation that was developed by this writer to make the Psalms more accessible for use in a therapeutic setting.

Mishna²³ (Repetition)²⁴

The Torah states that its text cannot be changed.²⁵ However, in order to live according to the 613 commandments in the Torah, it was necessary to figure out how to apply the laws to changing times. Early scholars believed that they were prohibited from writing down interpretations of the 613 commandments. Because of this, the scholars memorized the interpretations of the laws over centuries. This chain of oral tradition was called “The Oral Law.”

The Mishna is the curated written record of the Oral Law as developed in Babylonia. It was published by Rabbi Judah ha Nasi around 200 CE. The decision to make the Oral Law a written law code was a result of the death of hundreds of thousands of Jewish scholars during the Bar Kochba Rebellion against Rome. (132-135.) The Mishna is written in Hebrew and is very concise in its language. By 300 CE, scholars had already begun to study and expand the Mishna.

Their finished product, which united the Mishna with the Gemara and other commentaries is called “The Talmud.”

NIV²⁶

New International Version of the TaNaCh and the New Testament. This version of the Bible was first translated in 1978. The NIV reflects the very best of Biblical scholarship and translated the Bible into contemporary English.

Oral Law

See Mishna entry.

Pastoral Counseling²⁷

Pastoral Counseling is a unique form of counseling which uses spiritual resources as well as psychological understanding for healing and growth.

Poetry Therapy²⁸

Poetry Therapy is a psycho-therapeutic tool originally developed in 1920’s by Eli Grierfer (United States.). Dr. Jack Leedy (United States) later worked with Grierfer. Leedy popularized Poetry Therapy in the 1960’s. Poetry Therapy is a type of therapy that promotes growth and healing by having people express themselves (expressive therapy).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)²⁹

PTSD Is an emotional disorder triggered by a terrifying event. It presents as a collection of symptoms that may include:

- Emotional distress when face with something that reminds you of the trauma.
- Recurrent involuntary memories..
- Avoidance of things that might trigger an episode.
- Negative changes in mood and thinking.
- Feelings of detachment from others.
- Persistent negative emotional state.
- This causes impairment in functioning.
- Avoidance of distressing memories.
- Trouble concentrating.
- Hopeless about future.
- More in the DSM-5.

Psalm³⁰

The Psalms are poetic prayers that were meant to be sung. The Book of Psalms is in the section of Ketuvim (Writings) in the TaNaCh and has 150 psalms.

Psalm of Lament³¹

A Psalm of Lament is a particular Psalm form in the Biblical Book of Psalms. A Lament Psalm addresses the Divine. There may be a complaint and a petition to the Divine for compassionate action.

Psalm Therapy

Psalm Therapy is a term coined for this project. It is an expressive therapy based on Poetry Therapy that substitutes Psalms for secular poetry

Psychodynamic Therapy³²

Psychodynamic therapy is a form of insight-oriented therapy. It focuses on unconscious processes as they are manifested in a person's behavior.

Psychological Biblical Criticism³³

Psychological Biblical Criticism is an approach to reading and interpreting biblical texts that is critically sensitive to psychological factors and the effects of the Bible on individual readers. Psychological Biblical Criticism is not a single perspective but encompasses many different approaches. In its various manifestations, Psychological Biblical Criticism brings together insights into human behavior, consciousness, will, and intention, and the critical study of the biblical tradition.

Psychologist³⁴

Psychologists have the professional training and clinical skills to help people learn to cope more effectively with life issues and mental health problems.

Psychosomatic Illness³⁵

Psychosomatic Illness is a psychological condition in which there is a physical manifestation of an emotional state.

Psycho-therapeutic Process³⁶

The Psycho-therapeutic Process is one in which patterns of conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings and behaviors are discussed between a client and a practitioner.

Psychotherapy (Talk therapy)³⁷

Psychotherapy is a therapeutic model that aims to improve a person's well-being and mental health through a process of discussion.

Redaction Criticism³⁸

Redaction Criticism examines the way the various pieces of the tradition have been assembled into the final literary composition by an editor. The arrangement and modification of these pieces, according to this method's proponents, can reveal something of the author's intentions and the means by which author hoped to achieve them.

Shechinah³⁹ (Divine Presence)⁴⁰

Shechinah is the feminine aspect of God's indwelling presence. This aspect of God is a Rabbinic creation.⁴¹ Medieval Kabbalists often portrayed the feminine *Shechinah* as a loving mother who suffers along with the Jewish people. The *Shechinah* is also seen as a healing presence in life and the guardian of our souls after death.

Social Worker⁴²

Social workers help relieve people's suffering. Social Workers help people cope with acute conditions and are clinical therapists.

Spiritual Director⁴³

A Spiritual Director is a person who is trained to help a person deepen their relationship with the Divine and guide an individual in developing a deeper awareness of spirituality.

TaNach/ Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament

These three names all refer to the same text. It is the five books of Moses, The Books of the Prophets and what is called the Writings.

Talmud⁴⁴ (Learning)⁴⁵

The Talmud is a set of books which brings together the Mishna and the Gemara along with later commentaries. The general topics have to do with Jewish Law and Lore. There are two different versions of the Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud, (*The Bavli*) was compiled by scholars living in Babylonia from about 300 – 600 CE. The Palestinian Talmud, (*The Yerushalmi*) was compiled in Palestine around from about 300 – 500 CE. Because the *Bavli* was more comprehensive, it became the most authoritative commentary on the Oral Law. The *Bavli* has 63 tractates (parts) of the Babylonian Talmud.

Tetragrammaton – יהוה, (Yud Hey Vav Hey) YHVH, Jehovah, Yahweh⁴⁶

The Tetragrammaton is the most personal name of God for Jews. This is the four letter name of God. It is unvocalized in Hebrew. A substitute word, “Adonai” is used by Jews when this word is found in the TaNaCh and in liturgy. Christians often pronounce this word as either Yahweh or Jehovah. In English language Bibles, both Jewish and Christian, the Tetragrammaton is almost always translated as Lord.

Transformation (as used in psychology)⁴⁷

The word “transformation” in psychoanalytic theory is the process by which unconscious wishes or impulses are disguised in order to gain admittance to consciousness.

Unconscious⁴⁸

The region of the psyche containing memories, emotional conflicts, wishes, and repressed impulses that are not directly accessible to the conscious mind but that have significant effects on thought and behavior.

The Zohar⁴⁹

The Zohar is a foundational book of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah). The Zohar first appeared in 13th century Spain and was published by Moses de Leon.

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Notable People

The following individuals are people who have contributed to the development of the fields referenced in this project.

The Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760)⁵⁰

Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer, or as most people know him the Baal Shem Tov, was the founder of the Chasidic movement. He taught that prayer, love of the Divine and love of one’s fellow Jews is of great importance.

Caspar Bartholinus (1585-1629)⁵¹

Caspar Bartholinus is a Christian theologian who wrote a guide called *True Psychology from Sacred Writing*. He identified Genesis 2:7 (the story of Adam) as the foundation of Biblical Psychology.

Walter Brueggemann (b. 1933)⁵²

Walter Brueggemann is an American Protestant Old Testament Scholar. He is considered to be one of the most influential scholars of the Hebrew Bible in the last several decades.

He is known for his method of combining literary and sociological methods when reading the Bible. His work builds on both Claus Westermann and Herman Gunkel. (See below.)

Donald Capps (1939-2015)

Donald Capps' works shaped the field of pastoral theology. He wrote many books, one being *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling* (Used in this project).

John Calvin (1509- 1564)⁵³

John Calvin was a French theologian and a reformer of the Protestant Reformation. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism, aspects of which include the doctrines of predestination and of the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation of the human soul from death and eternal damnation.

Franz Delitsch (1813-1890)⁵⁴

Franz Delitsch was a premier Lutheran scholar of the 19th century. He wrote the first book on Biblical Psychology. He used techniques learned from psychology to illuminate the Biblical texts.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)⁵⁵

Sigmund Freud was the founder of modern psychotherapy. Freud's work lays the groundwork for considering three other dimensions of the text largely ignored in earlier studies. These are the unconscious as a factor at work in the text and on the reader, the psychodynamic factors in narratives and interpretive approaches and the psychological aspects of religious phenomena.

Erich Fromm (1900-1980)⁵⁶

Erich Fromm was one of the world's leading psychoanalysts. Fromm credited a person's psyche as the consequence of biology and as well as society. His predominant emphasis was on the consequences of consumerism on the consciousness of one's own individuality.

Eli Grierer (1900-1966)⁵⁷

Eli Grierer was a lawyer, pharmacist and poet who was credited with coining the term "Poetry Therapy." He worked with Dr. Jack Leedy to formally start using poetry as a therapeutic approach.

Herman Gunkel (1862-1932)⁵⁸

Herman Gunkel was a German Lutheran Old Testament scholar who pioneered the Form Critical method used on the Book of Psalms. This method allowed scholars to provide

new and meaningful ways to look at individual psalms. He created a nomenclature for different genres of psalms.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430)⁵⁹

Augustine of Hippo was a premier Christian theologian. His Biblical Psychology dominated Christian thinking until the 10th century.

Judah ha Nasi (135-220)⁶⁰

Rabbi Judah ha Nasi compiled and published the Mishna in 200 CE.

Carl Jung (1875-1961)⁶¹

Carl Jung was one of the creators of modern depth psychology, this seeks to facilitate a conversation with the unconscious. He believed that religious texts were a therapeutic system.⁶²

Dr. Jack Leedy (1921-2004)⁶³

Dr. Jack Leedy was a psychiatrist who worked with Eli Grier to create the therapeutic model of poetry therapy and was instrumental in creating the National Association of Poetry Therapy in 1969.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi (1st half of 3rd century C.E.)⁶⁴

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was a rabbinic teacher of the 3rd century C.E. He is a commentator in the Gemara and the Talmud. He was also known to be a halakhist whose views were widely accepted.

Rashi (1040-1105)

Rashi was Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzak. He is one of the most influential Jewish commentators in history. He is known for his commentary on the TaNaCh and the Babylonian Talmud. His commentary is known for its clarity, conciseness and his ability to shed light on obscure texts.⁶⁵

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772- 1810)⁶⁶

Rebbe Nachman was the great grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement. His religious philosophy revolved around closeness to God and speaking to God in normal conversation “as you would with a best friend.” Rebbe Nachman taught that the psalms had Minimal value in mere recitation. One must identify, he taught, with their contents in a deep and meaningful way and seek to apply the words to oneself in order to find oneself in every psalm.

\Wayne G. Rollins (b. 1930)⁶⁷

Wayne G. Rollins began the Psychology and Biblical Studies section in the Society of Biblical Literature in 1991. His 1999 volume, *Soul and Psyche: The Bible in Psychological Perspective* attempts the first comprehensive definition of the field.

Reb Zalman Schacter-Shalomi (1924-2014)⁶⁸

Reb Zalman's ideas and works are the basis for the Jewish Renewal movement. He was a visionary in creating a fully inclusive community, making Jewish mysticism and joyful observance available to several generations of American Jews.

Dr Hirsch Lazaar Silverman (1915-2014)⁶⁹

Dr Silverman was a clinical and forensic psychologist as well as a poet. He was a leading educator in the fields of psychology, mental health, behavioral sciences and education.

Kristin M. Swenson (b. 1967)⁷⁰

Kristin Swensen is a writer, theologian and educator. She studies how interpretations of the Bible influences and shapes modern conceptions and thinking in areas such as health, the environment, and social relationships.

Tertulian of Carthage (150-220)⁷¹

Tertulian was a Christian theologian who first developed an example of Biblical Psychology.

Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918)⁷²

Julius Wellhausen was a German Scholar of the Old Testament who put forward a new and modified hypothesis concerning the four sources: Jahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomy (D), Priestly Code (P) (The Documentary Hypothesis).

Clause Westermann (1909-2000)⁷³

Clause Westermann was a German Protestant Old Testament scholar and a student of Herman Gunkel. His thesis was that all Psalms in the Book of Psalms are either a response to or derived from the Psalms of Lament

¹ Mohammad Masood. Ahmed, *Would You like to Know Something about Islam?: the Time Is Ripe* (Wingdale, NY, NY: Crescent Books Inc., 2011), xiii.

² *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5* (New Delhi: CBS Publishers & Distributors, Pvt. Ltd., 2017), 222-223

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Addendum

מְזוּנֵינוּ מְלֵאִים מְפִיקִים מִן אֶל־עַן צֹאנֵינוּ מְאֻלִּפּוֹת מְרֵבֹת בְּחוּצוֹתֵינוּ:

Our storehouses are full, supplying produce of all kinds; our flocks number thousands,
even myriads, in our fields; (Psalm 144:13)

Part A

These Psalms which highlight various mental health issues and the healing process are presented in this project. The Mini Psalms were developed from the complete Psalms that appear here in the JPS translation of the TaNaCh.¹⁶⁴

Psalm 6

- 1 -For the leader; with instrumental music
on the sheminith. A psalm of David.
- 2 O LORD, do not punish me in anger,
do not chastise me in fury.
- 3 Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I languish;
heal me, O LORD, for my bones shake with terror.
- 4 My whole being is stricken with terror,
while You, LORD—O, how long!
- 5 O LORD, turn! Rescue me!
Deliver me as befits Your faithfulness.
- 6 For there is no praise of You among the dead;
in Sheol, who can acclaim You?
- 7 I am weary with groaning;
every night I drench my bed,
I melt my couch in tears.
- 8 My eyes are wasted by vexation,
worn out because of all my foes.
- 9 Away from me, all you evildoers,
for the LORD heeds the sound of my weeping.
- 10 The LORD heeds my plea,
the LORD accepts my prayer.
- 11 All my enemies will be frustrated and stricken with terror;
they will turn back in an instant, frustrated.

Psalm 22

1 For the leader; on ayyeleth ha-shaḥar.

A psalm of David.

2 My God, my God,

why have You abandoned me;
why so far from delivering me
and from my anguished roaring?

3 My God,

I cry by day—You answer not;
by night and have no respite.

4 But You are the Holy One, enthroned,
the Praise of Israel.

5 In You our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and You rescued them.

6 To You they cried out
and they escaped;
in You they trusted
and were not disappointed.

7 But I am a worm, less than human;
scorned by men, despised by people.

8 All who see me mock me;
they curl their lips,
they shake their heads.

9 “Let him commit himself to the LORD;
let Him rescue him,
let Him save him,
for He is pleased with him.”

10 You drew me from the womb,
made me secure at my mother’s breast.

11 I became Your charge at birth;
from my mother’s womb You have been my God.

12 Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.

13 Many bulls surround me,
mighty ones of Bashan encircle me.

14 They open their mouths at me
like tearing, roaring lions.

15 My life ebbs away:
all my bones are disjoined;
my heart is like wax,
melting within me;

16 my vigor dries up like a shard;
my tongue cleaves to my palate;
You commit me to the dust of death.

17 Dogs surround me;
a pack of evil ones closes in on me,
like lions [they maul] my hands and feet.

18 I take the count of all my bones
while they look on and gloat.

19 They divide my clothes among themselves,
casting lots for my garments.

20 But You, O LORD, be not far off;
my strength, hasten to my aid.

21 Save my life from the sword,
my precious life from the clutches of a dog.

22 Deliver me from a lion's mouth;
from the horns of wild oxen rescue me.

23 Then will I proclaim Your fame to my brethren,
praise You in the congregation.

24 You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you offspring of Jacob, honor Him!

Be in dread of Him, all you offspring of Israel!

25 For He did not scorn, He did not spurn
the plea of the lowly;
He did not hide His face from him;
when he cried out to Him, He listened.

26 Because of You I offer praise in the great congregation;
I pay my vows in the presence of His worshipers.

27 Let the lowly eat and be satisfied;
let all who seek the LORD praise Him.
Always be of good cheer!

28 Let all the ends of the earth pay heed and turn to the LORD,
and the peoples of all nations prostrate
themselves before You;

29 for kingship is the LORD's
and He rules the nations.

30 All those in full vigor shall eat and prostrate themselves;
all those at death's door, whose spirits flag,
shall bend the knee before Him.

31 Offspring shall serve Him;
the Lord's fame shall be proclaimed
to the generation to come;

32 they shall tell of His beneficence to people
yet to be born,
for He has acted.

Psalm 23

1 A psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd;

I shall not want

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me to water in places of repose;

3 He renews my life;

He guides me in right paths

as befits His name.

4 Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness,

I fear no harm, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

5 You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

my drink is abundant.

6 Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

for many long years.

Psalm 38

1 A psalm of David. Lehazkir.

2 O LORD, do not punish me in wrath;
do not chastise me in fury.

3 For Your arrows have struck me;
Your blows have fallen upon me.

4 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your rage,
no wholeness in my bones because of my sin.

5 For my iniquities have overwhelmed me;
they are like a heavy burden, more than I can bear.

6 My wounds stink and fester
because of my folly.

7 I am all bent and bowed;
I walk about in gloom all day long.

8 For my sinews are full of fever;
there is no soundness in my flesh.

9 I am all benumbed and crushed;
I roar because of the turmoil in my mind.

10 O Lord, You are aware of all my entreaties;
my groaning is not hidden from You.

11 My mind reels;
my strength fails me;
my eyes too have lost their luster.

12 My friends and companions stand back from my affliction;
my kinsmen stand far off.

13 Those who seek my life lay traps;
those who wish me harm speak malice;
they utter deceit all the time.

14 But I am like a deaf man, unhearing,
like a dumb man who cannot speak up;

15 I am like one who does not hear,

who has no retort on his lips.

16 But I wait for You, O LORD;

You will answer, O Lord, my God.

17 For I fear they will rejoice over me;

when my foot gives way, they will vaunt
themselves against me.

18 For I am on the verge of collapse;

my pain is always with me.

19 I acknowledge my iniquity;

I am fearful over my sin;

20 for my mortal enemies are numerous;

my treacherous foes are many.

21 Those who repay evil for good

harass me for pursuing good.

22 Do not abandon me, O LORD;

my God, be not far from me;

23 hasten to my aid,

O Lord, my deliverance.

Psalm 42

- 1 For the leader. A maskil of the Korahites.
- 2 Like a hind crying for water,
my soul cries for You, O God;
- 3 my soul thirsts for God, the living God;
O when will I come to appear before God!
- 4 My tears have been my food day and night;
I am ever taunted with, "Where is your God?"
- 5 When I think of this, I pour out my soul:
how I walked with the crowd, moved with them,
the festive throng, to the House of God
with joyous shouts of praise.
- 6 Why so downcast, my soul,
why disquieted within me?
Have hope in God;
I will yet praise Him
for His saving presence.
- 7 O my God, my soul is downcast;
therefore, I think of You
in this land of Jordan and Hermon,
in Mount Mizar,
- 8 where deep calls to deep
in the roar of Your cataracts;
all Your breakers and billows have swept over me.
- 9 By day may the LORD vouchsafe His faithful care,
so that at night a song to Him may be with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.
- 10 I say to God, my rock,
"Why have You forgotten me,
why must I walk in gloom,
oppressed by my enemy?"

11 Crushing my bones,
my foes revile me,
taunting me always with, "Where is your God?"

12 Why so downcast, my soul,
why disquieted within me?
Have hope in God;
I will yet praise Him,
my ever-present help, my God.

Psalm 88

- 1 A song. A psalm of the Korahites. For the leader;
on maḥalath leannoth. A maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.
- 2 O LORD, God of my deliverance,
when I cry out in the night before You,
- 3 let my prayer reach You;
incline Your ear to my cry.
- 4 For I am sated with misfortune;
I am at the brink of Sheol.
- 5 I am numbered with those who go down to the Pit;
I am a helpless man
- 6 abandoned among the dead,
like bodies lying in the grave
of whom You are mindful no more,
and who are cut off from Your care.
- 7 You have put me at the bottom of the Pit,
in the darkest places, in the depths.
- 8 Your fury lies heavy upon me;
You afflict me with all Your breakers. Selah.
- 9 You make my companions shun me;
You make me abhorrent to them;
I am shut in and do not go out.
- 10 My eyes pine away from affliction;
I call to You, O LORD, each day;
I stretch out my hands to You.
- 11 Do You work wonders for the dead?
Do the shades rise to praise You? Selah.
- 12 Is Your faithful care recounted in the grave,
Your constancy in the place of perdition?
- 13 Are Your wonders made known in the netherworld,
Your beneficent deeds in the land of oblivion?

- 14 As for me, I cry out to You, O LORD;
each morning my prayer greets You.
- 15 Why, O LORD, do You reject me,
do You hide Your face from me?
- 16 From my youth I have been afflicted and near death;
I suffer Your terrors wherever I turn.
- 17 Your fury overwhelms me;
Your terrors destroy me.
- 18 They swirl about me like water all day long;
they encircle me on every side.
- 19 You have put friend and neighbor far from me
and my companions out of my sight.

Psalm 102

- 1 A prayer of the lowly man when he is faint and
pours forth his plea before the LORD.
- 2 O LORD, hear my prayer;
let my cry come before You.
- 3 Do not hide Your face from me
in my time of trouble;
turn Your ear to me;
when I cry, answer me speedily.
- 4 For my days have vanished like smoke
and my bones are charred like a hearth.
- 5 My body is stricken and withered like grass;
too wasted to eat my food;
- 6 on account of my vehement groaning
my bones show through my skin.
- 7 I am like a great owl in the wilderness,
an owl among the ruins.
- 8 I lie awake; I am like
a lone bird upon a roof.
- 9 All day long my enemies revile me;
my deriders use my name to curse.
- 10 For I have eaten ashes like bread
and mixed my drink with tears,
- 11 because of Your wrath and Your fury;
for You have cast me far away.
- 12 My days are like a lengthening shadow;
I wither like grass.
- 13 But You, O LORD, are enthroned forever;
Your fame endures throughout the ages.
- 14 You will surely arise and take pity on Zion,
for it is time to be gracious to her;

the appointed time has come.

15 Your servants take delight in its stones,
and cherish its dust.

16 The nations will fear the name of the LORD,
all the kings of the earth, Your glory.

17 For the LORD has built Zion;
He has appeared in all His glory.

18 He has turned to the prayer of the destitute
and has not spurned their prayer.

19 May this be written down for a coming generation,
that people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

20 For He looks down from His holy height;
the LORD beholds the earth from heaven

21 to hear the groans of the prisoner,
to release those condemned to death;

22 that the fame of the LORD may be recounted in Zion,
His praises in Jerusalem,

23 when the nations gather together,
the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

24 He drained my strength in mid-course,
He shortened my days.

25 I say, "O my God, do not take me away
in the midst of my days,
You whose years go on for generations on end.

26 Of old You established the earth;
the heavens are the work of Your hands.

27 They shall perish, but You shall endure;
they shall all wear out like a garment;
You change them like clothing and they pass away.

28 But You are the same, and Your years never end.

29 May the children of Your servants dwell securely
and their offspring endure in Your presence.”

Psalm 126

1 A song of ascents.

When the LORD restores the fortunes of Zion
—we see it as in a dream—

2 our mouths shall be filled with laughter,
our tongues, with songs of joy.

Then shall they say among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them!”

3 The LORD will do great things for us
and we shall rejoice.

4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like watercourses in the Negeb.

5 They who sow in tears
shall reap with songs of joy.

6 Though he goes along weeping,
carrying the seed-bag,
he shall come back with songs of joy,
carrying his sheaves.

Psalm 131

1 A song of ascents. Of David.

O LORD, my heart is not proud

nor my look haughty;

I do not aspire to great things

or to what is beyond me;

2 but I have taught myself to be contented

like a weaned child with its mother;

like a weaned child am I in my mind.

3 O Israel, wait for the LORD

now and forever.

Psalm 142

1 A maskil of David, while he was in the cave.

A prayer.

2 I cry aloud to the LORD;

I appeal to the LORD loudly for mercy.

3 I pour out my complaint before Him;

I lay my trouble before Him

4 when my spirit fails within me.

You know my course;

they have laid a trap in the path I walk.

5 Look at my right and see—

I have no friend;

there is nowhere I can flee,

no one cares about me.

6 So I cry to You, O LORD;

I say, “You are my refuge

all I have in the land of the living.”

7 Listen to my cry, for I have been brought very low;

save me from my pursuers,

for they are too strong for me.

8 Free me from prison,

that I may praise Your name.

The righteous shall glory in me

for Your gracious dealings with me.

Part B

Psalms used in the Synoptic Gospels. All verses taken from the NIV Bible

- **Psalm 6:8** Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping. **Matthew 7:23** Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ and **Luke 13:27** “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’”
- **Psalm 22:1** My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? Both **Matthew 27:46** and **Mark 15:34** About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli,   lemasabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”)
- **Psalm 22:7** All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. **Matthew 27:39** Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads. **Mark 15:29** those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads...
- **Psalm 22:8** He trusts in the LORD,” they say, “let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.” **Matthew 27:43** He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ”
- **Psalm 22:18** They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. **Matthew 27:35** When they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments by casting lots. **Mark 15:24** And they crucified Him. They also divided His garments by casting lots to decide what each of them would take. **Luke 23:34** Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up His garments by casting lots. **John 19:24** So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it. Instead, let us cast lots to see who will get it.” This was to fulfill the Scripture: “They divided My garments among them and cast lots for My clothing.”
- **Psalm 42:5** Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. **Matthew 26:38** Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” **Mark 14:34** “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

- **Psalm 88:8** You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; **Luke 23:49** But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.
- **Psalm 91:11-12** 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; 12 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. **Matthew 4:6** “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”
- **Psalm 110:10** The Lord says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. **Luke 2:42-43** 42 David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand 43 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” ’.
- **Psalm 118:22-23** 22 The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; 23 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. **Mark 12:10-11** 10 Have you never read this Scripture: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 11 This is from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes.

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- For other ways to talk about God use thesaurus.com.
- For a singable version: Psalm 6 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGSwz_Bklpw)
 Psalm 22 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tudj6P-WZqo&t=638s>)
 Psalm 38 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzv2YIJDg_8&t=846s)
 Psalm 42 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILzrxENgRkk&t=90s>)
 There are many more to be heard on You Tube by different artists
- To find new words to the psalms and thoughts on death and dying look at Ritualwell.org.
<https://ritualwell.org/ritual/rosh-chodesh-elul-modern-psalm>
<https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/paths-fullness-interpretation-psalm-23>
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דַּרְכֵי סִפְרֹתַי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי לְמִדְוַי תִּקְיָה:

I have declared my way, and You have answered me; train me in Your laws. (Psalm 119:26)

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יְהִי לְרָצוֹן אֱמִרֹתַי וְהַגִּינוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:

May the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart

be acceptable to You, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:15)