

shîr ham-ma-a-lowt

Songs of Ascending

The Psalm Project



Introduction

There exists within the Telliym/Psalms a curious compilation of songs. These are known by various names: Songs of Degrees, Songs of Ascents, Songs of Steps, the Gradual Songs, etc. This psalter within the psalter, according to tradition, was performed while going up the temple steps. It might have been a latter truth, but it is unlikely in the origin of David's psalms, for the simple reason the temple did not exist until Solomon's time.

Scripture records David's contribution to the worship of ALOHIM. It also highlights his efforts to organize the Levitical musicians:

"Moreover, David and the chief leaders of his army selected the sons of Asaph and of Heman and of Ye'Hudutun. These were separated to prophesy with the lyre harp, with the nebel harp, and with cymbals...Two hundred, eighty, and eight existed the number of them, with their brethren. All were intelligent, distinguished musicians, and had been trained in the songs of YeHOWAH." (1 Chronicles 25:1,7)

David and his chief leaders selected musicians and then established a rotation to provide praise and leadership for the worship of YeHOWAH. It is likely that David's "Songs of Ascending" were part of that effort. It is also a distinct probability that the "ascending" referred to the people marching upwards toward the Tabernacle, located on the qodesh mountain of Tsion.

Whatever their origin or their use in the past, presently, they describe for us the ascent of the soul, from the depths of misery and despair upwards to beauty and joy found in the presence of the Most High.

I hope that your *ruach* will find that joy as you meditate upon these psalms and may these find their way into your personal worship of YeHOWAH.

A Song of Ascending (Psalm 120)

el YeHOWAH bas-sa-ra-tah bas-ra-ti li

In distresses,
When the adversary
Had pressed me
Into a narrow place,
I cried out, weeping,
Unto EI-YeHOWAH.
He heard.
He sang with a loud voice
In answer.

YeHOWAH,
Draw me away.
Snatch my *nephesh*
Like plunder
From deceitful lips
And from the edge of the mouth
That speaks fraudulently.

What shall He bestow upon you?
What shall be your inheritance,
O, you fraudulent mouth?
And what shall be added to you,
O, you idle hands?

Piercing arrows from the *gibbor*—
Mighty one—
With lightning
And burning coals
From the *rotemiym bushes!*

Alas!
Lamentation and misery
Have come upon me
Because I turned aside
From the Way,
And I sojourned
In Mesech,
Because I settled down to dwell
Among the tents
Of Kedar,
Descendant of Ishmael.

Enough!
My *nephesh*—
The living breathing
Essence of self,
The center of my will,
Thoughts and emotions—

For too much *time*
Have I caused *my nephesh*
To lie down and abide
In fellowship with the haters
Of *shalom*—
Of all which is
Security,
Wellness,
Prosperity,
Wholeness.

I am for *shalom*,
But when I set my words in order,
These *haters* are for battle.

**A Song for Levitical Choirs
A Song of Ascending
(Psalm 128)**

Asheri kal-yare YeHOWAH

Happy *exists* all
Who reverently fear YeHOWAH;
Who walk according
To His course of life,
And whose mode of action follows
The *Way of YeHOWAH*.

Your toil and grief,
The product of your labor—
Of the curved hollow of your hand—
Are remembered.
For you shall dine,
Yes, you shall eat and enjoy
The feast.
Happy shall you exist;

All shall be functional
For you.

As a twiggy vine
Growing along the innermost regions
Of your house,
Within the tent of your dwelling,
Ishteka—
Your woman—
Bears fruit
And increases with offspring.
Your sons,
Are as *tender* shoots
Or olive trees
In a circuit
Around your extended,
Spread-out table.

Behold!
Surely, *in this manner*,
Shall be laid up *for this one gifts*.
Kneeling down,
Your Maker shall place
These at your feet,
A blessing in praise
For every man
Who reverently fears
YeHOWAH.

Ye-baruka YeHOWAH—
YeHOWAH shall kneel
And place a gift at your feet,
A blessing,
Out of Tsyion,
The sunny mountain,
His fortress.
And from the dwelling of *shalom*—
The possession of peace—
Yerushalom—

You shall see and regard
The functional,
Kol yeme hayyeka—
All your days,
From the sunrise to the sunset
Of your life.

You shall see and regard
The *shalom* of your sons
And your sons's sons,
Upon Yashar'EL.

**A Song of Ascending
(Psalm 129)**

From my childhood,
Many archers
Have besieged me.
For ages,
Has the adversary
Oppressed me.

I pray
He will declare *it*
O, Yashar'EL.

Behold, indeed,
On many occasions—
Since I was a child—
Has *the adversary* bound me up,
Persecuted me,
Shut me up,
Pressed me into a tight spot,
And, yet, he has not been able
To master me.

YeHOWAH tsedek—
YeHOWAH,
Honest,
Steadfast,
A Powerful Warrior,
The One Who has the just cause—
He will cut asunder
The interwoven bonds
Of the condemned and guilty,
The morally wrong,
Those criminals
Liable for punishment.

Be astonished and confounded,
Be troubled and confused in mind,
Go away!
Draw yourself back,
All you haters
Of Tsion,
That sunny mountain.

The adversary—
He will exist
As grass
On the *flat* roof
Of the house:
As soon as it begins,
No sooner has it sprouted,
Than it is plucked up;
It becomes withered
And dry.
There is not enough
To make full
The curved hollow of the hand
Of him who cuts short
The harvest
Or the bosom of him
Who binds the sheaves
Into bundles.

Neither shall anyone declare
As they pass over:
Beruka YeHOWAH
Aleichem b'rakanu etkem
B'shem YeHOWAH!
(YeHOWAH kneel and place a gift
At your feet!
May a gift incline itself
In your direction
In the name of YeHOWAH!)

**A Song of Ascending
(Psalm 130)**

YeHOWAH,
Out of the deep places
I call out to You,
Weeping.

Adonai,
Hear and answer.
Listen to the sound
Of my distress,
To my voice as I cry out.
I am the offspring
Of Your servant;
Regard the covenant You made
With our fathers.
Let Your ears exist
Attentive
To my supplication.

Behold!
If You should watch
For depraved actions,
For guilt acquired,

If You should observe
Calamity
Misery
Penalty for wrongs—
YAH!
My Adonai!
Who could remain upright?
Who could stand
To minister
Before You?

For with You,
Our guilt is pardoned,
The thorns of our punishment
Are carried away.
We are outside.
You draw up near,
For the intent
That we might reverently fear.

I will be strong and robust,
O, YeHOWAH!
My *nephesh*—
My vitality,
The living, breathing essence
Of my self—
Expects
Waits
Hopes

A Song of Ascending

**Of David
(Psalm 133)**

Hinne ma tob

Behold,
As the beautiful song of a harp,
That is how pleasant it is
When kinsman,
When members of the same tribe,
Sit down
And dwell
In union
With one another!

It is like spiced oil—
The fatness
And fruitfulness of the earth—
As it is poured out,
Upon the highest
And supreme leader,
Descending
From the summit of the head
Onto the beard—
Even Aaron's bearded chin—
Going down
All the way—
The full length of cloth—
To the edges
Of his garments,
As the dew of Hermon
Descends upon the mountain
Of Zion.

For there
YeHOWAH appointed
Eth-beruka,
A gift placed at the feet,
Chaim le'olam va'ed,
Even life of long duration,
For as far as one can see or perceive,
To the edge of the horizon
And beyond.

**A Song of Ascending
(Psalm 134)**

Hinne baraku eth-YeHOWAH

Behold,
Kneel you and place a gift
At the feet of
Eth-YeHOWAH,
All you servants,
Chosen and beloved
Of YeHOWAH,
You, who stand firm,
Who minister,
You, who remain to pass
Layilah—the night season—
In the dwelling place
Of YeHOWAH.

Take up,
Lift up
Your hands
In the *qodesh sanctuary!*
Kneel and place your gift
Before eth-YeHOWAH.

YeHOWAH,
Who fashioned *shamiym*—
The roof of the world,
The visible arch of sky—
YeHOWAH,
Who labored to form *ertz*—
The land mass—
May He kneel and place a gift
At your feet
From Tzion,
His *qodesh* mountain.

