

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 YAHUAH." (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 YAHUAH. 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 YAHUAH.

A Song of Ascending (Psalm 120)

el YAHUAH 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-YAHUAH.
He heard.
He sang with a loud voice
In answer.

YAHUAH,
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 of Ascents
(Psalm 121)**

Asha anay el- he-har-iyim

My eyes I lift up
Unto the mountains;
From what direction
Will my Helper arrive?

My Helper from YAHUAH
Fashioned *shamiym wa'ertz*—
The roof of the world
And the inhabited lands.

Never will He permit
Your steps to totter and shake
Or your foot to be yoked
To follow another.
The Shepherd who guards you
Will not suffer through sloth

Or indolence;
He who ministers to you
Will never slumber.
Behold! He who guards Yashar'EL
Never shall He grow weary,
Never shall He sleep.

YAHUAH keeps watch over you.
YAHUAH exists
A covering in a dry land,
As your protection
And the defense
At your right hand.
Ha'shemesh shall not wound you
From its rising
Until the going down thereof,
And neither shall *you be* stricken
By *yareah b'layilah*—
The moon in the night season.

YAHUAH shall stand watch over you,
To protect you from all calamity,
From hurtful and malicious *circumstances*.
Indeed, He shall keep safe your *nephesh*.

YAHUAH shall keep watch over you
As you arise and go forth,
And, behold, as you enter in,
To experience the covenant,
For time 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 122)**

Of David

I was joyful
When they spoke unto me, *saying*,
Let us walk
Unto the tabernacle
Of YAHUAH.

Our foot exists to stand
Within your gates,
O, Yerusaliym,
City of teaching,
Possession of *shalom*.

Yerusaliym—
Built as a city,
Layer upon layer,
Bound,
Marked with stripes,
And joined together:

There ascends the tribes,
The chastening rod of YAHUAH,
Unto the *tabernacle of His* testimony,
To cast forth praise
Unto the Name and Character
Of YAHUAH.

For, to that place,
Are sat down
Royal thrones,
Tribunals *of the right*
And of that which is lawful
And just.
There sits the dwelling place
Of ALOHIM,
The royal pavilion
Of the house

Of David,
The beloved.

Inquire of *ALOHIM*,
Ask and seek
Shalom for Yerusaliym:
They will be secure
Who breathes after thee.

Shalom—
Security,
Wellness,
Prosperity,
Wholeness—
Will exist
Within your host,
Within your fortifications,
Will dwell
In the midst of *you*, securely,
In the highest and innermost part
Of *your* citadel.

On account of
My brother,
My beloved friend,
I will declare,
I will set words in order,
Now, in this age,
Shalom within your door,
O, Yerusaliym!
On account of the dwelling place
Of YAHUAH ALOHEYNU,
Her beauty,
Her excellence,
Her prosperity—
Her *tob*—
I will search out.

**A Song of Ascending
(Psalm 123)**

el-eka na-as-ti enay

Unto You
Will I lift up eth-my eyes,
O, You who sit down
Above the roof of the world.

Behold, my eyes
Are as the eyes of servants
Who turn toward
The hand of the power and authority,
Their *adonehiym*—masters,
And as the eyes of handmaiden
Toward the hand
Of her lady.

Standing erect,
Honest and upright,
Perpetually,
Until YAHUAH ALOHEYNU
Pity us
And be favorably inclined
Toward us.

Pity us,
O YAHUAH,
Incline Yourself toward us,
For vast and numerous
Are the archers;
We are satiated,
Filled to the brim,
With contempt.

Our *nephesh*—
The living, breathing,

Vital essence of self—
Is satiated,
Filled to the brim
With loathing and weariness;
Multiplied,
Vast and numerous,
Is the mockery and impious speech
Of the proud
Who live at ease,
And of the contempt
From those exalt themselves
In triumph.

**A Song of Ascending
(Psalm 124)**

Of David

Lu-li YAHUAH s'hayah

Unless YAHUAH did exist—
Let Yashar'EL bring it into the light,
I pray you—
Unless YAHUAH had existed
As our Help,
When *a'dam*, man, stood against us,
With nostrils flared,
And breathing heavily in their wrath,
(*Their attack as if a torrent of flood-waters*
Had passed over our nephesh.)

Therefore, when the raging waters
Descended upon our *nephesh*,
And then *abar*, passing over,
We would have been devoured alive.

Barak YAHUAH,

Who did not deliver us up
As food to be ripped apart
By their teeth.

Our *nephesh*,
As a small, twittering sparrow
Has slipped away smoothly
Out of the net spread out
By the bird-catchers.
The net is torn into pieces,
And we have escaped in haste.

Ez-re-nu b'shem YAHUAH—
Our Help Is in the Name and Character
Of YAHUAH,
Who fashioned
The roof of the world
And the inhabited lands.

**A Song of Ascending
(Psalm 125)**

hab-bo-te-hiym YAHAWAH

The ones who set their security
In YAHUAH,
Those who cast their cares *onto YAH*,
Are like Mount Tzion,
Which does not totter or shake,
But remains
For as far as one can see or perceive
To the edge of the horizon
And beyond.

As the mountains that encircle Yerusalam
Even in like manner

Does YAHUAH encircle
His people,
His kindred,
The tribes of Yashar'EL,
Both at this short time,
And for as far as one can see or perceive
To the edge of the horizon
And beyond.

For never shall set down
Or be at rest
The rod of the wickedness
And falsehood
Upon the lot or inheritance
Of those who follow
The correct path,
The Way of YAHUAH,
Lest the lawful and just
Stretch out their hands
Unto depravity.

Perform the *tob*—
That which is
Beautiful,
Cheerful,
Beneficial—
Yes, all that is good
Unto the upright in heart,
O, YAHUAH.

But those who stretch out the hand,
Who descend to tortuous, crooked ways,
Let them walk
With the fabricators of emptiness
And vanity.
Let calamity and misfortune
Plague their path.
But let *shalom* rest
Upon Yashar'EL.

**A Song of Ascending
(Psalm 126)**

b'shub YAHUAUH eth-shi-bat Tsion

YAHUAUH,
In returning *the captives*,
When You restored Tsion,
We existed as if dreaming:
Fat,
Strong and robust,
Fully recovered.

At that time,
Our mouth was made full
With laughter,
And our tongue, our speech,
With shouts of joy.
At that time, they declared
Among the *goyim*—
Those people
Without the covenant—
YAHUAUH has woven together
A mighty work for these.

Indeed, YAHUAUH has woven together
A powerful work in us.
We exist, joyful.

Return the captives,
O, YAHUAUH,
As the water streams
In the *Negeb*.
Those who scatter the seed
In tears,
Shall cut off *the harvest*
With shouts of joy!

Go,
Walk,
Tears dropping,
Running down your cheeks
As you lift up
And scatter
The precious seed.
You will come,
Yes, you will come *again*,
Lifting up, with a ringing cry,
The bound-up bundles of grain.

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

Asheri kal-yare YAHAWAH

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

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
YAHUAH.

Ye-baruka YAHUAH—
YAHAWAH 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—
Yerushalam—
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 127)**

Of Shalamah

im YAHAUAH lo yib-neh bay-it

Behold!
If YAHAUAH does not erect
The house,
Emptiness,
Desolation,
And calamity
To those who toil.
Behold! If YAHAUAH does not
Stand guard
Over the city,
The watchman waits,
Sleepless,
For nothing.

It is vanity
For you to stand up,
Rising before the sun
Is on the horizon—
Urgently,
Loading your beasts,

To tarry,
To sit down
And eat your bread
In toilsome labor,
In pain,
In grief of mind.
Do you not understand?
He will give sleep
To His beloved.

As arrows in the hand
Of the *gibor*—
The strong and mighty—
In like manner
Are sons
In your youth.

Happy the strong man
Whose house is made full,
Who hides these
In his quiver;
They shall not turn pale
With shame,
But he shall
Set words in order
With his haters
At the gates of judgment.

**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.

YAHUAUH tsedek—
YAHUAUH,
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 Tzion,
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 YAHUAH
Aleichem b'rakanu etkem
B'shem YAHUAH!
(YAHUAH kneel and place a gift
At your feet!
May a gift incline itself
In your direction
In the name of YAHUAH!)

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

YAHUAH,
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, YAHUAH!
My *nephesh*—
My vitality,

The living, breathing essence
Of my self—
Expects
Waits
Hopes
And in His *debar*—
Word set in order—
Do I remain.

My *nephesh* awaits in expectation
More than those
Who stand guard await
The breaking forth of the light.
Indeed, much more than those
Who stand guard await
The breaking forth of the light.

Remain in hope,
O, Yashar'EL
Expect EL YAHAUAH,
Ha'chesed wa'raba wa'am p'dut:
For with YAHAUAH
Are woven together
Zealous desire and redemption,
Multiplying,
Increasing,
Until it exists
Too numerous to count.

And He will loosen the bonds
Of Yashar'EL,
He will set free from all
Depraved actions,
And from the penalty for sin
And its calamity and misery.

A Song of Ascending

(Psalm 133)

Of David

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 Tsion.

For there
YAHUAH 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-YAHAUAH

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

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

YAHAUAH,
Who fashioned *shamiym*—
The roof of the world,
The visible arch of sky—
YAHAUAH,

Who labored to form *ertz*—
The land mass—
May He kneel and place a gift
At your feet
From Tsion,
His *qodesh* mountain.