

Psalm 23

¹A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd
I lack nothing.
²He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me to water in places of repose;
³He renews my life;
He guides me in right paths as befits His name.
⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff — they comfort me.
⁵You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my drink is abundant.
⁶Only 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.

Debra Band

Participant's Text

Text #2

“And how I bore you on eagles’ wings (Exodus 19:4). How is the eagle distinguished from all other birds? All the other birds carry their young between their feet, being afraid of other birds flying higher above them. The eagle, however, is afraid only of men who might shoot at him. He, therefore, prefers that the arrows lodge in him rather than in his children...As it is said: “And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bore thee, as a man doth bear his son ”(Deuteronomy 1.31).

Text #3

Blessed is he who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord alone. He shall be like a tree planted by waters, sending forth its roots by a stream: It does not sense the coming of heat, its leaves are ever fresh; it has no care in a year of drought, it does not cease to yield fruit. (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Text #4

Come to me at dawn, love,
Carry me away;
For in my heart I’m thirsting
To see my folk today.

For you, love,
mats of gold
Within my halls I’ll spread.
I’ll set my table for you,
I’ll serve you my own bread.

A drink from my own vineyards
I’ll pour to fill your cup--
Heartily you’ll drink, love,
Heartily you’ll sup.

I’ll take my pleasure with you
As once I had such joy
With Jesse’s son, my people’s prince,
That Bethlehem boy.

Scheidlin. *The Gazelle*. p. 97

Barbara Ellison Rosenblit
Psalm 23 Interpretive Reading I
Script

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD (PSALM 23)
THE INTER-GENERATIONAL READING

Imagine a family reunion where three generations have gathered together. A zealous young film student in the family is making an intergenerational video. She queries the three. Their answers, in *bold italics*, spoken in three voices, comprise the text of the 23rd psalm. *Unbolded italics* signal each character's thoughts, also spoken, though softly.

Filmmaker: *Who is God to you?*

Child: *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall lack nothing. To lush grass He leads me/ By calm waters He herds me.*

Filmmaker: *Who is God to you?*

Mother: [to herself, perhaps looking away, spoken softly]: *Who is God to me? I have lived long enough to witness injustice in this world. I look to God to renew me, to clear my confusion, to revive me, counsel me, give me a measure of justice. Please God, I need Your help.*

[in full voice, addressed to the filmmaker] *The Lord revives my spirit; He counsels me in the spheres of justice for the sake of His Name.*

Grandmother [interrupting her daughter –but closing her eyes]: *And though I have walked in the valley of the death-shadow [her granddaughter quivers at the image] Even there I will not fear evil because You stand with me.*

Mother [to herself, again, looking away, softly]: *Listen to her—she calls to God intimately. "You," she calls God, not "He." The old woman has called out to God. I seek justice, and she seeks solace. Her eyes are closed. She is looking for God, here close to the end of her life. She has come to God again and again seeking comfort and solace, offering praise and thanksgiving.*

Grandmother: [to herself, softly] *I am bent, and my bones are brittle.*
[She reaches to touch her cane, which rests on the arm of the chair. She sighs aloud]:

Your tribal rod and supporting staff console me.

You prepare before me a table in the view of my enemies

[To herself, softly]: *Does a hospital room among strangers await me?*

[She scans the room and looks lovingly at both her daughter and granddaughter. She pats her eyes with a handkerchief.]

You anoint my head with oil, my cup is filled.

[Now the three generations recite together the closing lines of this psalm, but for each the words express a different idea.]

Child, Mother and Grandmother in unison:

Goodness and grace will pursue me all the days of my life/ And I will rest in God's House for the length of my days.

Barbara Ellison Rosenblit
Interpretive Reading II Script

THE 23RD PSALM BY KING JAMES
the thoughts of a second grader meeting the psalm for the first time

[Let one person read the lines of the psalm (*bold italics*) and another read the musings of the earnest little girl]

OCTOBER 4, 1956

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.

Child: Mrs. Gibson said that this is a som.

I don't know what som means exactly, but it has a lot of lines that our class will learn by heart. Mrs. Gibson says that now that we're in second grade, we're ready to tackle this and other Bible pieces. I like Mrs. Gibson. She's old with gray hair and high-buttoned collars. Her shoes are black and lace up and she is strict but has a soft touch when she rests her hand on my back and leans over to see my work. I like my school work. We have spelling tests every week, and I always make hundreds. Except one, where I thought she said "cole" like cole slaw, but really she said coal, like the kind you burn.

This whole som is hard to make sense of, but the first part is not so hard. It says--I don't want a Lord who is a shepherd, but it says it backwards, because that's what soms do, mix words and phrases around to make them like a puzzle to unscramble. If I wrote it in plain English it would say, *I do not want the Lord to be a shepherd.*

That's an odd idea, isn't it? The Lord dressed up as a shepherd. What does that mean we are sheep? Lying around in the fields all day, eating grass, not much to do? Get our wool shaved off for sweaters, maybe become lamb chops. This is a good and funny beginning for this som-- Who could imagine a worse fate than spending your life as a sheep, except maybe becoming a donkey like Pinocchio. I don't want the Lord to be a shepherd because I sure don't fancy being a sheep.

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

There, just as I predicted, making me lie down when the hills beyond are calling me, leading me to standing-still water like the smelly pond near our house with the scum that floats on top of it. This som is about not wanting to be led around like a bunch of sheep.

Before every spelling test, we all recite together, "Good, better, best--I will never rest until I make my good better and my better best." Sheep aren't good, better, best. The best

are the ones who just do what they're told. That's nothing to aim for, to be the best at lying around and drinking from smelly ponds?

He restoreth my soul.

I wonder why King James wrote this som with all those *eths*. *Eths* do make it sound quite fancy, really, but they're hard to say. Maketh, leadeth, restoreth. Mrs. Gibson says that soms use that kind of language because that's the language of the Bible.

A soul. A soul is something that God gives you that may live in your feet, and when you die, my father told me your soul goes up to heaven. Is your soul divided between your two feet? If one is amputated, do you have only half a soul left? Could we damage a soul with shoes that don't fit? Mamma sits on the couch and cuts the calluses off her feet sometimes. She always tells us that she hopes we don't ruin our feet like she did. Her second toe curls over her big toe and there is this big bone that juts out of the side of her big toe. Daddy told me you can't see your soul and that everyone has a soul and that God put it there. How does it leave once you're dead? If we have souls until we die, then what does restoring your soul mean? Is it like resoling your shoe? What does a restored soul look like? Is it as good as a new one? Do all souls look the same? Most feet look the same, unless you have six toes or webbed toes. They're not like faces that tell who we are by just looking at them.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His namesake.

Who is God's namesake? Who is named for God?

My namesake is my grandfather--both my grandfathers, really--Barney and Louis. I miss not having any grandfathers, just their names to know them by. I beg for stories to know them better, to know if their names have magic.

Names are curious, aren't they? They tell a lot about us. Daddy calls me so many names--Sis--Sis Delaimes--Barbaronisis--Dolly. Every name he calls me is a pet name. When he calls me by one of those names, I feel happy. Daddy loves me. He never gets mad at me and always knows how to fix everything and he is patient and he can find anything that is lost.

Does God have pet names that the angels call him?

On the first day of school, Mrs. Gibson asked us to introduce ourselves by our family names and our Christian names. I am the only Jewish person in the class and was sure I didn't have a Christian name, and when I told her that, she smiled and said that Barbara was my Christian name. Later, Joe LeVert asked me how I knew I was Jewish and I told him that I just was and he said to bring him proof. I couldn't. What proof is there? I felt bad and sort of afraid of him.

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

This valley, what must it be? What does ‘yea’ mean? before starting off on the trek? Shadows of death. Grey and dark and not even the moon to light your way. Why does this som say that death is scary? I think that when you die you learn the pleasures of heaven. You find out the greatest mystery of the world--what God looks like.

I have thought a lot about God. God is surely not a shepherd. God is mysterious, and shepherds are just bored or maybe even not so smart, standing around with hardly anything to do. And so lonely. I’ve thought about it quite some time, and I have this idea that God is air. Air is all around us--invisible. God is all around us--invisible. If we shoot the air with a gun, it won’t die. And God can never die; you can’t kill God, and you can’t kill air. Air gives us life and keeps us alive; we could not live without it. We breathe it in and it fills our body with life. We breathe out and it keeps the plants alive. When we are born our mouths and lungs open for the first time and God enters us. Maybe that’s when the soul comes in and fixes itself in our feet. Air circulates through us to keep the whole world going. We breathe God in with every breath; is that what it means to restore our souls?

A rod and a staff. I thought that a rod is what is used for hitting. “Behave or I’ll take the rod to you.” That was what Anne of Green Gables’ teacher said to the boys misbehaving in class. Does this shepherd have a rod in both hands? How can these sticks used to keep you in line, to wop you if you misbehave, be comfortable, bring comfort? That’s why I don’t want God to dress as a shepherd-- I don’t want Him to use a rod on us.

Thou preparest a table before me

A white tablecloth. Flowers. China. A feast. God could make such delicacies.

Imagine what delicious food the angels could prepare.

Delicious smells pouring from the heavenly kitchen.

We have a small kitchen in a tiny apartment, and Bubbie is there most of the time. She sits and shells pecans. First she pulls a long hairpin from her thin grey bun and she uses it to dislodge the nutmeats from the shells. She spends hours sitting there shelling, putting the nutmeats into glass jars. She snaps beans in huge pots; with a flick of the wrist, she takes off the ends and pulls the long string down the side of the bean. She loves to cook and she cooks all day. Bubbie is big and fat and old, and she wears shoes like Mrs. Gibson’s, but her dresses are silky-looking flowered fabrics and have no shape. She doesn’t much like kids around. Bubbie always has newspaper under her when she works, and she squints as she looks over her glasses. She says “ern-yuns” for onions and says “wrench” for rinse. She tells me and my brother to stay out of her way and go play in the other room and don’t break anything.

In the presence of mine enemies Thou anointest my head with oil my cup runneth over.

What could be worse? God pouring oil on your hair, down your head, like sticky, glue covering your face while people who hate you watch; everything leaking out of the cup set at your place, spilling out, running out of your cup all over the clean white tablecloth. Nightmare! Why would God do such a thing? What did we do to deserve this? Is He an angry shepherd? Did the flock roam too far? I don't want a shepherd to torture me if I make a mistake. I want God to be air.

Surely Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever.

At least the som has a happy ending. But I don't know what went wrong that made God angry and what happened to make it right again. I don't know where God's house is, and how will everyone be able to dwell there. Doing anything forever sounds like an awfully long time, and I can't imagine not getting bored, being in the same house forever. Do you grow older forever? Can you take a vacation? Is this Forever House far?

Barbara Ellison Rosenblit

Psalm 23 Interpretive Reading III

Script

A VOICE CLOSE TO THE EDGE

As I lay dying

The scenario for this psalm is set in the hospital. The text is the 23rd psalm. The commentary is the interior monologue of a dying woman in a hospital.

Read the psalm with two readers, one the voice of the text of the psalm, one the voice of the ill woman responding through her pain to the words of the psalm.]

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing
To lush grass He leads me
By calm waters He herds me.*

Woman: Tubes run through me, one nostril blocked as the tube runs down my nose into my stomach to suck the poisons out. My thumb rests on the button so that I can ease the pain -- they say "control the pain" -- with only so much as a twitch of the finger. *What do I lack?*

Is my husband, Jerome, asleep? There he rests, eyes closed, brow furrowed, feet propped up. Yesterday was our 47th wedding anniversary.

The doctor told me there are cancer cells on the liver, spread from the colon, and nothing can be done.

I have been to funerals, hundreds. All of Jerome's family is in the cemetery now. The blades of grass force their way up between the cracks in the stones, between the graves themselves. Lush grass, fields of grass.

*...And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.
Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken
soon out of their mother's laps,
And here you are the mother's laps.
The grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers.... (1)*

I am multi-colored fluids filling the plastic receptacle that hangs from the bedpost. The silent, bulging bag that hangs from the stand above my bed leaks colorless fluid back into me; it will turn red and yellow before it seeps back out. Drop by drop. *Still waters.*

This is what I am now. Liquids in, fluids out, cancer trying to eat me alive from the inside out. No one will ever know who I really am. Who I really was. They can see a fragment, and that fragment only a reflection of themselves in me, what they think they see, what they want to see. My dreams and memories will die with me. I leave behind but a shadow.

*He revives my spirit.
He counsels me in the spheres of justice
for the sake of His Name.*

“Can you live ten years with cancer?” That’s what I heard Jerome ask the doctor. Can you believe him? I’m 79 years old, and he’s asking about 10 years. Do I have 10 months? 10 weeks? He doesn’t believe I’m on the way out.

My daughter cries when she thinks I’m asleep. Don’t cry. My life has been good. Happy. I would change nothing.

From the window, I see leafless trees. Tomorrow is new year’s eve. I have forgotten more than I remember. Yet I remember much of joy and love.

*What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply,
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before;
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more. (2)*

Jerome sneezed. “God bless you.”

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

Boy I hate to think that that rabbi will be doing my funeral. He doesn’t know me. Can eighty years be compressed into a hundred words? a thousand? three sentences in the newspaper? half a phrase chiseled on the face of the stone?

Shall I fear death? Maybe the Mormons are right and all your dead relatives gather together to welcome you into heaven. They have begun to come again and again in my dreams.

I have such strange dreams, full of dead people. Are they preparing me?

Sometimes sleep is the only relief I have from the thoughts that race around inside my head and keep me from rest. I welcome sleep; I cherish sleep, if only to free me from my fears. Sometimes I awake refreshed, ready to read the funny papers.

***You prepare before me a table in view of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil, my cup is filled.***

In my dream, I am lying on a hospital table, a white sheet covering the hard metal, separating me from it. Is it an altar? Am I an offering? Will I be sacrificed up to the insatiable god of illness and suffering? Does everyone have a good view? Those who care and those who don't? Will some rejoice as I die?

***Goodness and grace will pursue me all the days of my life,
And I will rest in God's House for the length of my days.***

Please God, don't let me linger, hooked up and helpless. That's all I ask.

[This musing on the 23rd psalm was written by Barbara Rosenblit as she sat in the hospital with her mother who was in the final stage of her fight with cancer. Ed.]

Barbara Ellison Rosenblit

Psalm 51 Radical Reading

¹For the conductor, a song of David

²When Nathan the prophet came to him
After David had been with Bat Sheva

³Be gracious to me, God, with your kindness
With great compassion, erase my crimes

⁴Completely wash away my iniquities
And make me pure despite my sins

⁵Because my crimes I acknowledge
And my sins haunt me endlessly

⁶Before You and You alone I sinned
I did evil in your eyes
So that Your words will be justified.
So that You will be right in Your verdict

⁷Look! In iniquity was I born
Sinful was my mother's heated passion

⁸Here! You seek truth in my innermost
being,
So, make me know wisdom in my innermost
heart

⁹Disinfect me with hyssop and I will be pure
Wash me and I will be as white as snow

¹⁰Let me hear joy and gladness
Then the bones You crushed will rejoice

¹¹Hide Your Face from my sins
And erase all my iniquities

¹²A pure heart create for me O God
A proper spirit renew in my inner being

¹³Don't send me away from Your presence
Don't take away Your holy spirit from me

¹⁴Return to me the joy of Your salvation
And with a generous spirit support me

¹⁵I will teach sinners Your ways
Sinners will return to You

¹⁶Rescue me from this blood!
God, God of my Deliverance
Let my tongue sing joyously of Your
righteousness

¹⁷My Lord, open my lips
And my mouth will tell of Your praises

¹⁸Since You do not wish an offering, else I
would give it
Nor a burnt offering do you want

¹⁹The slaughter offerings of God are a
broken spirit
and a broken, battered heart
These God will not reject

²⁰Do good as is Your will, to Zion
Rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

²¹Then You will desire righteous sacrifice,
burnt offerings and whole offerings
Then bullocks will be offered on Your altar.

Barbara Ellison Rosenblit

Psalm 51 script

READING: FOR TWO VOICES – A Drama

Bat Sheva's psalm of unremitting suffering

David's psalm of confession and renewal

Narrator:

Bat Sheva weeps from outside David's chamber.

Inside the room, David cries to God for forgiveness, approaching God with the gift-offering of the poet. David's words comprise the text of Psalm 51 in its entirety.

From the periphery, outside the inner sanctum, Bat Sheva sobs out her anger, her loss, her psalm. She hears David as he approaches God. He cannot hear her, though she speaks words of the psalm as well. Hers is the marginalized voice of the silenced soul.

Bat Sheva:

I hate him. Rushing about. Howling. Shrieking. I despise him. Nathan is gone now and suddenly, he cries out, all contrition and tears. And I am left to mourn my dead husband, and to nurse this child of sin. His lips won't suck; his eyes are hollow. His tiny fingers cannot grasp my shaking hand.

God, what have You done to me?

Narrator:

From within the chamber she hears David's voice, filled with weeping and remorse.

David:

**Be gracious to me, God, with Your kindness
With great compassion, erase my crimes
Completely wash away my iniquities
And make me pure despite my sins**

Bat Sheva:

How dare his guilty lips give voice to such a cry. He knows how to cry for forgiveness, while I live with this guilt. I know the guilt of women. I know the bargain we strike. I know my choices.

I, too, acknowledge my crimes because my sins haunt me endlessly.

Is there no comfort from my grief?

David:

**Before You and You alone I sinned
I did evil in your eyes**

**So that Your words will be justified
So that You will be right in Your verdict**

Bat Sheva:

*Before You and You alone!? Who? Before whom? Before God --and not before me!?
Before whom will I repent? When you summoned me forth to sin, to whom should I
have appealed? Let him never forget!*

I will never forget.

*I will never forget that day. The air was so clear. I had gone to the ritual bath late, as
the sun began to set behind the Judean hills. The ritual waters surrounded me and
cleansed me.*

It was the last time I felt clean.

*Could I have known? I was dressing when I saw the king's guard inquiring of the
bathhouse attendant. She cast a glance my way and whispered to him. He grinned,
no—leered—when he looked my way.*

*I had rounded the corner to my house when they approached, those three, snickering
into their stinking robes. “Dress quickly, lucky lady. You have been chosen to warm the
king's bed tonight.”*

He cries to You for mercy?! He cries to You for compassion, to make him pure?!

Who can make me pure?

Narrator:

They speak together, he from inside, she from outside.

David:

Look! In iniquity was I born. Sinful was my mother's heated passion.

Bat Sheva:

*And in sin this baby was conceived with the guilt of heat. Through me my sins have
borne such sickly fruit.*

David:

**Here! You seek truth in my innermost being
So make me know wisdom in my innermost heart
Disinfect me with hyssop and I will be pure
Wash me and I will be white as snow
Let me hear joy and gladness
Then the bones You crushed will rejoice**

Bat Sheva:

There is not water enough on earth to wash this stain from me.

*I can still feel the blood leak down my legs. It stains me forever. I carry my sin in my
arms. Blood pulsates through those tiny veins, that pallid flesh.*

My shame envelops me, as once You did.

David:
Hide Your Face
from my sins

Narrator:
As both speak "from my sins," David's voice fades but Bat Sheva's rises.

Bat Sheva:
From my sins, too, erase all my iniquities.

David:
A pure heart create for me.

Bat Sheva:
O God, don't let my hatred consume me. Don't let my grief press me into the earth. Don't let this baby suffer for my sins. You love his father. Then love him. Save this child for his sake, if not for mine.

Surely not for mine.

Are You so cruel?

David (his voice growing stronger):
A proper spirit renew in my inner being

Bat Sheva:
I deserved Your cruelty. For some sin of mine that I know not, God, forgive me. Don't leave me.

Don't send me away from Your Presence.

Narrator:
Bat Sheva weeps, for her blasphemy, for her sorrow, for the innocent child who she fears will be sacrificed to atone for her sin, for her dead husband, for her arrogant lover.

David (his voice stronger still):
Don't take away Your holy spirit from me.
Return to me the joy of Your salvation
And with a generous spirit support me
I will teach sinners Your ways
Sinners will return to You

Bat Sheva:
Your lips are golden. How sweetly they form the words.

And yet you dare to exclude me from your prayer? Those honeyed lips that dared to call me to your bed then dared to call for the murder of my husband. What remorse did your lips form then? You. You! You will teach sinners!?

Nathan came to tell you a children's story so you could understand what you had done. He told a story about sheep, so you could understand. You shepherd, in king's robes-- You arrogant self-centered killer! What were your prayers when you sent Uriah away, his death warrant in his hand? Did nothing, no one, none of the deaths count to you until Nathan came and told you a story he made up? And oh, to watch you fly into a rage over a rich man who took another's sheep! It was comical, your anger so easily aroused. You! Too selfish to notice anyone or anything. Or to see yourself. What you had done.

David:

Rescue me from this blood!

Bat Sheva:

Rescue me from this blood.

David:

God, God of my Deliverance

Let my tongue sing joyously of Your righteousness

My Lord, open my lips

And my mouth will tell of Your praises

Since You do not wish an offering, else I would give it

Nor a burnt offering do You want.

The slaughter offerings of God

are a broken spirit and a broken, battered heart.

These God will not reject.

Narrator:

Bat Sheva falls to the ground, clutching the child in her arms. He does not cry out.

Bat Sheva:

The slaughter offerings of God are a broken spirit and a broken, battered heart. These God will not reject.

My broken spirit, my battered heart I bring before You. What else have I to offer? Can I heal from this sorrow? O God, open my lips too, that my sorrow will give way to...to what? What? I cannot even say the words. As he opens his heart, so do I yearn for comfort. But You have turned from me. Taken from me to give to him.

David:

Do good as is Your will, to Zion

Rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

Then You will desire righteous sacrifice,

**burnt offerings and whole offerings
Then bullocks will be offered on Your altar.**

Bat Sheva:

When will You have taken enough? When will I have given enough?

I pray

Dear God,

Let the yelps and spraying blood of some dumb beast

Hurled helpless upon Your altar

Replace the sacrifice of this dying babe.

Rebuild the walls of my womb to house the seed of Your people.

Heal me, O God. Heal me now.

For I am broken.

Debra Band
Psalm 91: The Illuminated Text
Participant's Text

¹O you who dwell in the shelter of the Most High
and abide in the protection of Shaddai—
²I say of the LORD, my refuge and stronghold,
my God in whom I trust,
³that He will save you from the fowler's trap,
from the destructive plague.
⁴He will cover you with His pinions;
you will find refuge under His wings;
His fidelity is an encircling shield.
⁵You need not fear the terror by night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
⁶the plague that stalks in the darkness,
or the scourge that ravages at noon.
⁷A thousand may fall at your left side,
ten thousand at your right,
but it shall not reach you.
⁸You will see it with your eyes,
you will witness the punishment of the wicked.
⁹Because you took the LORD—my refuge,
the Most High—as your haven,
¹⁰no harm will befall you,
no disease touch your tent.
¹¹For He will order His angels
to guard you wherever you go.
¹²They will carry you in their hands
lest you hurt your foot on a stone.
¹³You will tread on cubs and vipers;
you will trample lions and asps.
¹⁴“Because he is devoted to Me I will deliver him;
I will keep him safe, for he knows My name.
¹⁵When he calls on Me, I will answer him;
I will be with him in distress;
I will rescue him and make him honored;
¹⁶I will let him live to a ripe old age,
and show him My salvation.”

Text #2

O my dove, in the cranny of the rocks, hidden by the cliff,
Let me see your face, let me hear your voice;
For your voice is sweet and your face is comely.

Rabbi Judy Weiss
The Biblical Text
Participant's Text

Psalm 113

Hallelujah.

O servants of the LORD, give praise;
praise the name of the LORD.

²Let the name of the LORD be blessed
now and forever.

³From east to west
the name of the LORD is praised.

⁴The LORD is exalted above all nations;
His glory is above the heavens.

⁵Who is like the LORD our God,
who, enthroned on high,

⁶sees what is below,
in heaven and on earth?

⁷He raises the poor from the dust,
lifts up the needy from the refuse heap

⁸to set them with the great,
with the great men of His people.

⁹He sets the childless woman among her household
as a happy mother of children.

Hallelujah.

Psalm 114

When Israel went forth from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech,

²Judah became His "holy one,"

Israel, His dominion.

³The sea saw them and fled,

Jordan ran backward.

⁴mountains skipped like rams,
hills like sheep.

⁵What alarmed you, O sea, that you fled,
Jordan, that you ran backward,

⁶mountains that you skipped like rams,
hills, like sheep?

⁷Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,

⁸who turned the rock into a pool of water,
the flinty rock into a fountain.

Rabbi Judy Weiss
The Biblical Text

Psalm 126: A song of ascents,

When the LORD restores the fortunes of Zion
we see it as in a dream
²our 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!”
³The LORD will do great things for us
and we shall rejoice.

⁴Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like watercourses in the Negeb.
⁵They who sow in tears
shall reap with songs of joy.
⁶Though he goes along weeping,
carrying the seed-bag,
he shall come back with songs of joy,
carrying his sheaves.

Text #2

Dear God, let my heart grasp the profound wisdom with which You created the world. Help me understand that life’s difficulties are in fact her opportunities; life’s endings are also her beginnings; life’s disappointments are her finest teachers.

(Source: The Gentle Weapon: Prayers for Everyday and Not-So-Everyday Moments, edited by Mykoff and Mizrahi)

Psalm 126: Text #3

Dear God, suddenly I’m alone; I’m in pain. As I search for some source of comfort, the world—the world so full, so bustling—seems so empty now. It’s cold and it’s frightening in this hollow that is me—in this hollow that once brimmed with confidence and joy. God, pull me back—back to the world of the living, back to a life of action and human relationships.

(Source: The Gentle Weapon: Prayers for Everyday and Not-So-Everyday Moments, edited by Mykoff and Mizrahi)

