

OPENING TO YOU  
ZEN  
INSPIRED TRANSLATIONS  
OF THE  
PSALMS

BY  
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HAPPY IS THE ONE WHO walks otherwise  
Than in the manner of the heedless  
Who stands otherwise  
Than in the way of the twisted  
Who does not sit in the seat of the scornful  
But finds delight in the loveliness of things  
And lives by that pattern all day and all night—

For this one is like a tree planted near a stream  
That gives forth strong fruit in season  
And whose leaf doesn't wither  
And whose branches spread wide—

Not so the heedless

They are like chaff scattered by the wind  
Endlessly driven, they cannot occupy their place  
And so can never be seen or embraced  
And they can never be joined

What you see is always lovely and remembered  
But the way of heedlessness is oblivion

Psalm  
1

BECAUSE I CALL

You answer

For you are fitting

Because I am small

You enlarge me

For you are gracious

You hear my song

How long will the others

Darken my light

How long will they

Live in uselessness

Lies and seduction

Knowing you set aside

The good for your own

And answer me when I call

People, tremble

And be upright

Commune with your hearts

In the deep of night

Awake on your beds

Be still:

Offer that

For it is fitting

Trust it

For it is the rightness

Of all that is

People say

Who will bring us

What we need?

Who will beam

## Psalm

4

Heaven's light

On us?

But already

My heart has more joy

Than full granaries

And wineries

Could provide

And I will lie down

To sleep

With a deep peace

For in you

I find my completion

LISTEN

Incline your ear toward me  
Listen to my piercing cry as I pray  
At daybreak hear my voice  
When I order my words toward you  
And wait

For you do not take pleasure in the crooked  
The heedless can never reach your courts  
The arrogant fall away when you look at them  
The wicked are distasteful to you  
Liars you cut off  
The violent ones, the deceivers, you cast away

But as for me—  
Bathed in your encircling kindness I enter your house  
Bow myself down before your presence  
In awe and wonder

Lead me into rightness against the force of my envy  
Straighten me  
For their mouths know not a single sincere word  
Inside they are full of deception  
Their throats are graves  
Their tongues slides  
Cast them out of me  
Let them fall by their own weight all the way down  
For they are your counterforce

Then all who put their trust in you will rejoice  
Will shout out their joy in your protection  
Will exalt in you all who love your unsayableness  
For you bless the faithful  
Circling them round like a shield

**Psalm**  
**5**

DON'T CRUSH ME with your anger  
Don't singe me with your flame  
But be gracious, for I am diminishing  
And heal me, for I am terrified even to the bones of my  
body  
And my heart is seared, and my soul shrinks

And you: how long  
How long O Lord, how long?

Turn now  
O turn and revolve my soul

This is the work of your natural kindness  
For in faithless death there's no one to remember you  
And in mute narrowness no one to sing your  
thanksgiving songs

I am exhausted from my sighing  
Every night my bed's a lake of sorrow  
A drowning flood of tears and sweat  
My eyes are blind with grieving  
They become weak with the force against me

You now leave me, narrowness and  
blindness!  
For the voice of my weeping has been heard!

My lamentation has turned into courage  
Now the narrowness that pressed against me is startled  
Suddenly it is turned—shamed and disarmed—

**Psalm**  
**6**

I CALL OUT TO YOU  
For the real is gutted  
The truth has fallen away  
From the human family  
And self-deceit and small advantage corrupt speech

Between neighbor and neighbor subtle lies weave  
    entangling threads  
They speak with a heart and a heart beside that heart  
Even their own hearts they unknowingly deny

Cut off all nattering lips  
The self-doubtful tongue that speaks a twisted  
    language  
Saying, "With our words we'll be mighty  
We'll speak as we wish,  
Our words are ours to fashion"

And you reply,  
"Because of the oppression of the poor  
Because of the sighs of the needy  
I will rise up  
I will grant them safety  
For whom the others have laid a snare  
By the self-deceit of their words"

Your words  
Are straight, clear, shining  
As silver refined in earth's crucible  
Seven times purified—  
You will deliver them, guard them  
From the generation of the lie  
Always—

**Psalm**  
**12**

For when the lie is raised up  
The wicked walk proudly on every side  
As if the world were made for them

How long will you persist in forgetting me?  
How long will you hide your face?  
How long do I have to drive my soul on  
With useless heartache and grief?  
How long will my detractors laugh at my manufactured  
troubles?

Look down, answer me—  
Brighten my eyes so they won't sink into deadness  
So that my detractors won't say  
"Look, we have deceived him"  
So that they won't rejoice as I slip out of sight

I trust your kindness—  
Gladden my heart with your responding  
And I will sing your songs  
In this sudden opening to you

**Psalm**  
**13**

THE USELESS FOOL SAYS in his heart  
"God is nothing"  
People are corrupt, do only harm  
Not one does good unselfishly, not one

You gaze down from the highest  
Upon humankind in the middle  
To see if there is one person with eyes  
One with understanding  
One capable of seeing your seeing

But they are all gone bad  
All turned sour and blind  
There is none who knows good  
Not one

Is there not even a speck of understanding  
In all the world of blind heedlessness  
Among those who eat up others as if they were bread  
And do not even know their own hearts  
Or a single true word?

But they become terrified even within their terror  
When they see you burning in the circle of goodness  
Shining out of the eyes of the lowly and the poor  
Showing your holiness in their defeat  
Your invincible power at the center of their weakness

O that someone might come out of Zion  
To bring freedom to the strugglers!

When you capture the people again  
The sojourners will be glad  
And the strugglers will rejoice with strong singing

**Psalm**  
**14**

I LIFT MY EYES to the mountain peak—  
Where does my help come from?  
It comes from you  
Maker of heaven and earth  
Who holds my foot firm on the path up  
Who's constantly present  
Everywhere aware

Look!  
With you there's no obscurity  
Nothing is dim, asleep, inert  
To those who question and struggle  
You respond, keep hold, give cover  
So that by day the sun won't burn  
Nor by night the moon mesmerize

You guard against evil  
Enfold and reveal the soul

Guard my arrival  
Secure my departure—  
Now:

Always

**Psalm  
121**

JOY DRENCHED ME when you said  
Come inside my house  
Now our feet stand within your gates, Jerusalem  
Planted upon your wholeness

Jerusalem,  
Place where each is welcome  
All belong

For this is the place  
Toward which people ascend  
Giving thanks with their mouths  
Singing the thousand names of the nameless  
And here stand the upright chairs of David's justice

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem  
Pray that all who love her will be well  
May there be peace within her walls  
Plenty in her palaces

For the sake of all that lives and is  
Let me speak these heart words:  
Peace, peace,  
Peace for Jerusalem

And for your sake  
From inside your house  
I pledge myself to seek the good

**Psalm  
122**

HAPPY IS THE ONE WHO stands in awe of you  
Who walks your pathways

When he eats what his hands have harvested  
He is content and all is well  
His wife is like a fruitful vine beside the house  
His children like olive saplings round about the table

Who stands in awe of you is happy  
Knows your blessing in Zion  
Sees Jerusalem's joy a whole life long  
And lives to see grandchildren—

May there be peace one day  
For all who question and struggle

**Psalm**  
**128**

OUT OF THE DEPTHS I call to you  
Listen to my voice  
Be attentive to my supplicating voice

If you tallied errors  
Who would survive the count?  
But you forgive, you forbear everything  
And this is the wonder and the dread

You are my heart's hope, my daily hope  
And my ears long to hear your words  
My heart waits quiet in hope for you  
More than they who watch for sunrise  
Hope for a new morning

Let those who question and struggle  
Wait quiet like this for you  
For with you there is durable kindness  
And wholeness in abundance  
And you will loose all our bindings  
Surely

**Psalm**  
**130**

PRAISE TO YOU from the sky's boundary  
Praise to you from the mountain's crown  
Praise to you from winged angels  
From all the hosts of heaven and earth  
The stars and their unimaginable brightness  
The heavens in their silent dome  
And the waters beyond those heavens  
All wordlessly praise your unnameable name  
For by your timeless speech  
All is created—why should it be?  
And all is established endlessly  
Your unsayable saying that none can unsay  
All life of earth is your praise  
And the life of the sea and all unknowable depths  
Fire and hail, snow and cloud  
Tornado and hurricane—all is your speaking  
Mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars  
Wildcats, cattle, buzzards, birds  
Kings and their subjects, princes, judges  
Young men, young women, old men, boys—  
All are your name's praising  
For your unspeakableness alone is what is  
Your brightness lights the earth and sky  
Raises us up, blares out the note  
From your people's trumpet  
An exultant blast for all who struggle with you  
And are close at hand

**Psalm  
148**

PRAISE TO YOU in your holiness  
Praise throughout your expansive realm  
Praise for the power of your doing  
For your abundance and everywhere-ness  
All praise  
Praise with the blowing of trumpets  
Praise with the psaltery and harp  
Praise with timbrel and dance  
With stringed instrument and pipe  
Praise with clear-sounding cymbals  
And with crashing cymbals  
  
Every breath is your praise

**Psalm  
150**