

# The Prayers of the People

Reflections on the Psalms

“In the Psalms, the human soul extends itself beyond its confining, sheltering, impermanent house of clay. It strives for contact with the Ultimate Source of all life. It gropes for an experience of the divine Presence. The biblical psalms are essentially a record of the human quest for God.”

Nahum Sarna, *On the Book of Psalms*

# Genres & Functions

- Genres: Hymns, Praise/Thanksgiving, Wisdom, Royal/Messianic, Supplication, Historical, Lament/Complaint, Liturgical
- Functions
  - Devotional
  - Formational
  - Liturgical

# Psalm 71:1-6

In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;

let me never be ashamed.

In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free;

incline your ear to me and save me.

Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe;

you are my crag and my stronghold.

Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked,

from the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.

For you are my hope, O Lord God,

my confidence since I was young.

I have been sustained by you ever since I was born;

from my mother's womb you have been my strength;

my praise shall be always of you.

# Psalm 90

Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust,  
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."

For a thousand years in your sight  
are like yesterday when it is past,  
or like a watch in the night.

You sweep them away; they are like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning;  
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;  
in the evening it fades and withers.

For we are consumed by your anger;  
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.  
You have set our iniquities before you,  
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.  
For all our days pass away under your wrath;  
our years come to an end like a sigh.  
The days of our life are seventy years,  
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;  
even then their span is only toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.  
Who considers the power of your anger?  
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

So teach us to count our days  
that we may gain a wise heart.

Turn, O Lord! How long?

Have compassion on your servants!

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,  
and as many years as we have seen evil.

Let your work be manifest to your servants,  
and your glorious power to their children.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,  
and prosper for us the work of our hands—  
O prosper the work of our hands!