

Psalm 94

The Psalm for Wednesday

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Psalms 94	תהילים צ"ד
<p>(1) God of retribution, LORD, God of retribution, appear!</p> <p>(2) Rise up, judge of the earth, give the arrogant their deserts!</p> <p>(3) How long shall the wicked, O LORD, how long shall the wicked exult,</p> <p>(4) shall they utter insolent speech, shall all evildoers vaunt themselves?</p> <p>(5) They crush Your people, O LORD, they afflict Your very own;</p> <p>(6) they kill the widow and the stranger; they murder the fatherless,</p> <p>(7) thinking, "The LORD does not see it, the God of Jacob does not pay heed."</p> <p>(8) Take heed, you most brutish people; fools, when will you get wisdom?</p> <p>(9) Shall He who implants the ear not hear, He who forms the eye not see?</p> <p>(10) Shall He who disciplines nations not punish, He who instructs men in knowledge?</p> <p>(11) The LORD knows the designs of men to be futile.</p> <p>(12) Happy is the man whom You discipline, O LORD, the man You instruct in Your teaching,</p> <p>(13) to give him tranquility in times of misfortune, until a pit be dug for the wicked.</p>	<p>(א) אֵל-נִקְמֹת יְהוָה אֵל נִקְמֹת הוֹפִיעַ:</p> <p>(ב) הַנָּשֵׂא שִׁפְט הָאָרֶץ הַשֹּׁב גָּמוּל</p> <p>עַל-גָּאִים: (ג) עַד-מְתֵי רְשָׁעִים יְהוָה</p> <p>עַד-מְתֵי רְשָׁעִים יַעֲלֶזוּ:</p> <p>(ד) יִבְעוּ יִדְבְּרוּ עֲתִק יִתְאַמְרוּ כָּל-פְּעֻלֵי</p> <p>אָוֶן:</p> <p>(ה) עֲמֹךְ יְהוָה יִדְכְּאוּ וְנִחַלְתֶּךָ יַעֲנֹו:</p> <p>(ו) אֲלִמְנָה וְגַר יְהַרְגוּ וַיְתוּמִים יִרְצְחוּ:</p> <p>(ז) וַיִּאמְרוּ לֹא יִרְאֶה-יְיָ וְלֹא-יִבִין אֱלֹהֵי</p> <p>יַעֲקֹב:</p> <p>(ח) בִּינוּ בְּעַרְיִים בְּעַם וְכִסְיִלִים מְתֵי</p> <p>תִשְׁכְּלוּ:</p> <p>(ט) הַנִּטֵּעַ אֶזְרָן הֲלֹא יִשְׁמַע אִם-יִצָּר עֵינַי</p> <p>הֲלֹא יִבִּיט:</p> <p>(י) הַיֹּסֵר גּוֹיִם הֲלֹא יוֹכִיחַ הַמְּלַמֵּד אָדָם</p> <p>דַּעַת:</p> <p>(יא) יְהוָה יִדַּע מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָדָם כִּי-הֵמָּה</p> <p>הַבָּל:</p> <p>(יב) אֲשֶׁרִיו הַגִּבֹּר אֲשֶׁר-תִּיַסְרֵנוּ יְיָ</p> <p>וַיִּמְתַּרְתֶּךָ תִּלְמִדְךָ:</p> <p>(יג) לְהַשְׁקִיט לוֹ מִימֵי גֶעַד יִכְרֶה לְרָשָׁע</p> <p>שִׁחַת:</p>



<p>(14) For the LORD will not forsake His people; He will not abandon His very own.</p> <p>(15) Judgment shall again accord with justice and all the upright shall rally to it.</p> <p>(16) Who will take my part against evil men? Who will stand up for me against wrongdoers?</p> <p>(17) Were not the LORD my help, I should soon dwell in silence.</p> <p>(18) When I think my foot has given way, Your faithfulness, O LORD, supports me.</p> <p>(19) When I am filled with cares, Your assurance soothes my soul.</p> <p>(20) Shall the seat of injustice be Your partner, that frames mischief by statute?</p> <p>(21) They band together to do away with the righteous; they condemn the innocent to death.</p> <p>(22) But the LORD is my haven; my God is my sheltering rock.</p> <p>(23) He will make their evil recoil upon them, annihilate them through their own wickedness; the LORD our God will annihilate them.</p>	<p>(יד) כִּי־לֹא־יִטֹּשׁ יְהוָה עַמּוֹ וְיַנְחִלְתּוּ לֹא יַעֲזֹב:</p> <p>(טו) כִּי־עַד־צֶדֶק יָשׁוּב מִשֹּׁפֵט וְאֶחָדָיו כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל־לֵב:</p> <p>(טז) מִי־יִקְוֶה לִי עִם־מַרְעִים מִי־יִתְיַצֵּב לִי עִם־פְּעָלִי אָנוּן:</p> <p>(יז) לֹלְאֵי יְהוָה עֲזָרְתָה לִי כַמְעֹט שְׂכָנָה דוּמָה נִפְשִׁי:</p> <p>(יח) אִם־אֶמְרֵתִי מָטָה רַגְלִי חִסְדְּךָ יְהוָה יִסְעֶדְנִי:</p> <p>(יט) בְּרַב שָׂרַעֲפֵי בְקִרְבִי תִנְחַוּוּמִי־יִשְׁעִשְׁעוּ נִפְשִׁי:</p> <p>(כ) הִיחַבְרָךְ כֶּסֶף הַיּוֹת יֹצֵר עֲמָל עַל־יְחִיק:</p> <p>(כא) יִגְדּוּ עַל־נַפְשׁ צְדִיק וְדָם נָקִי יִרְשָׁעוּ:</p> <p>(כב) וַיְהִי יְהוָה לִי לְמִשְׁגָּב אֱלֹהֵי לְצִוֵּר מִחֻסִּי:</p> <p>(כג) וַיִּשָּׁב עָלֵיהֶם אֶת־אוֹנָם וּבְרַעְתָּם יִצְמִיתֵם יִצְמִיתֵם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:</p>
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<p>Deuteronomy 33:2</p> <p>(2) He said: The Lord came from Sinai, And shone upon them from Seir; [God] appeared from Mount Paran, And approached from Ribebboth-kodesh, Lightning flashing at them from [God's] right.</p>	<p>דברים ל"ג:ב'</p> <p>(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה מִסִּינַי בָּא וְזָרַח מִשְׁעֵיר לָמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ מִהָר פָּאֵרָן וְאֶתָּה מִרִּבְבֹּת קִדְשׁ מִיַּמִּינֹו (אשדת) [אש דת] לָמוֹ:</p>
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<p>Psalms 28:7</p> <p>(7) The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him. I was helped, and my heart exulted, so I will glorify Him with my song.</p>	<p>תהילים כ"ח:ז'</p> <p>(ז) יְהוָהוּ עֲזָרִי וּמִגְנִי בּוֹ בֵּטַח לִבִּי וְנִעְזַרְתִּי וַיַּעֲלֵז לִבִּי וּמִשִׁירֵי אֲהוֹדָנוּ:</p>
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<p>Deuteronomy 10:18</p> <p>(18) but upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing food and clothing.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">דברים י"ח</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(יח) עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאַהֲבֵה גֵר לָתֵת לוֹ לֶחֶם וְשָׂמְלָה:</p>
<p>Deuteronomy 14:29</p> <p>(29) Then the [family of the] Levite, who has no hereditary portion as you have, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your settlements shall come and eat their fill, so that your God The Lord may bless you in all the enterprises you undertake.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">דברים י"ד:כ"ט</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(כט) וּבָא הַלֵּוִי כִּי אֵין-לוֹ חֵלֶק וְנִחְלָה עִמָּךְ וְהָגֵר וְהַיְתוֹם וְהָאַלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְאָכְלוּ וְשִׂבְעוּ לִמְעַן יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֶךָ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה:</p>
<p>Isaiah 1:17</p> <p>(17) Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; Aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; Defend the cause of the widow.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">ישעיהו א'י"ז</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(יז) לִמְדוּ הַיָּטֵב דַּרְשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁרוֹ חָמוּץ שִׁפְטוֹ יְתוֹם רִיבוֹ אֲלַמְנָה:</p>
<p>Proverbs 3:11-12</p> <p>(11) Do not reject the discipline of the LORD, my son; Do not abhor His rebuke.</p> <p>(12) For whom the LORD loves, He rebukes, As a father the son whom he favors.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">משלי ג'י"א-י"ב</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(יא) מוֹסֵר יְהוָה בְּנֵי אֶל-תִּמְאָס וְאַל-תִּקְוֶץ בְּתוֹכָחָתוֹ:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(יב) כִּי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהֵב יְהוָה יוֹכִיחַ וְזָכָאב אֶת-בְּנוֹ יִרְצָה:</p>
<p>Job 5:17</p> <p>(17) See how happy is the man whom God reproves; Do not reject the discipline of the Almighty.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">איוב ה'י"ז</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(יז) הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר יִאֲנוֹשׁ יוֹכַחְנוּ אֱלֹהִים וּמוֹסֵר שִׁדְיָי אֶל-תִּמְאָס:</p>



<p>Proverbs 26:27</p> <p>(27) He who digs a pit will fall in it, And whoever rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.</p>	<p>משלי כ"ו:כ"ז</p> <p>(כז) כָּרַח־שַׁחַת בָּהּ יִפּוֹל וְגוֹלֵל אֶבֶן אֵלָיו תִּשָּׁוֵב:</p>
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<p>Proverbs 28:10</p> <p>(10) He who misleads the upright into an evil course Will fall into his own pit, But the blameless will prosper.</p>	<p>משלי כ"ח:י'</p> <p>(י) מִשְׁגָּה יִשְׂרִים בְּדַרְךָ רָע בְּשַׁחֲוִיתוֹ הוּא־יִפּוֹל אִתְּמִימִים יִנְהַלּוּ־טוֹב:</p>
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<p>Proverbs 28:18</p> <p>(18) He who lives blamelessly will be delivered, But he who is crooked in his ways will fall all at once.</p>	<p>משלי כ"ח:י"ח</p> <p>(יח) הוֹלֵךְ תְּמִים יִשָּׁע וְנַעֲקֹשׁ דְּרָכָיִם יִפּוֹל בְּאַחַת:</p>
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Erich Zenger, *God of Vengeance* (1996), p. 79

As poetic prayers, the psalms of vengeance are a passionate clinging to God when everything really speaks *against* God. For that reason they can rightly be called *psalms of zeal*, to the extent that in them passion for God is aflame in the midst of the ashes of doubt about God and despair over human beings. These psalms are the expression of a longing that evil, and evil people, may not have the last word in history, for this world and its history belong to God. Thus, to use theological terminology, these psalms are realized theodicy: they affirm God by surrendering the last word *to God* . They give *to God* not only their lament about their desperate situation, but also the right to judge the originators of that situation. They leave *everything* in God's hands, even feelings of hatred and aggression.

These psalms do not arise from the well-tempered psychological state of people from whom every scrap of sensitivity and emotion has been driven out. On the contrary, they are serious about the fundamental biblical conviction that in prayer we may say *everything*, literally everything, if only we say it to God, who is our father and mother.

