

## PREFACE

When I was a child, I found great comfort in the words of the Psalms. They offered assurance that GOD was on my side, not only protecting me, but striking down those who prevented me from doing GOD's work! Today, the same words cause me to wince. While the 'us and them' mentality encouraged by the writers of the Psalms spoke to my childhood needs, now they remind me of the all too human desire for glory and revenge, which leads to the demonizing of others to justify their demise. Filled with images of violence and cries for vindication, the Psalms rarely speak of compassion among human beings. While the Psalmist appeals to GOD's compassion for his own salvation and that of his people, within a few words the same writer asks also that the wicked around him be punished, sometimes using graphic detail to suggest a method! How are we to find inspiration and instruction in these writings? Do the Psalms have anything to say about tolerance, love and peace in our world today?

Looking beyond the words of the text to the heart of the Psalmist, I sensed yearnings buried beneath the violence, a hunger as relevant now as ever before. I tried to feel my way to the heart of the praying one: the anguish of separation, the humility of disappointment, gratitude for answered prayers, the joy of conscious moments in the presence of GOD. Thus many of the prayers and poems presented here focus on the inner life as a means of preparation for serving others. Our human experience is not a solitary journey; attention to one's own expectations and motivations prepares us to become

better citizens of both heaven and earth. By “removing the log” from our own eye we are in a better position to participate in the vision of GOD.

Each of the prayers and poems in this book was inspired by the Psalm that shares its number. Five themes have emerged from the Psalms themselves: the majority are affirmations of GOD’s saving grace and prayers for help, some are directions for living a life in accordance with GOD’s will, others are declarations of praise, and a few are written as if GOD is speaking to the pray-er. I have chosen not to group the poems by theme, but to maintain the biblical numbering, which helps to illustrate the emotional highs and lows that are part of every seeker’s experience.

These meditations are laced with the message of acceptance, forgiveness and compassion. In this sense, they may not always be true to the specific intentions of the ancient writers of the Psalms. But as genetic offspring, they are children that reshape the past for a very different present generation. They are dedicated to all who seek a fuller understanding of GOD in their lives.

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