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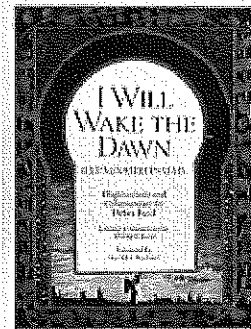
Spirituality & Traditions

SUMMER ISSUE 2008
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Illuminating the Psalms

For many of us, our only encounter with psalms is hearing them read at a funeral, as part of the Shabbat service or when a family member is ill.

Maryland manuscript artist Deborah Band readily admits that, despite her Modern Orthodox upbringing, she had generally read psalms by rote, never paying much attention to what they said. That is, until one day when, prodded by her father-in-law, Arnold J. Band, professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at UCLA, she started to read them closely. "It was like an explosion to me," she recalls. "Some express ecstatic joy, others desperation, yet others scream for revenge. It's astonishing how fresh and immediate they are. They are really gutsy religious poetry."



Now Deborah Band is helping to bring about a new appreciation of the psalms through her glorious new book, *I Will Wake the Dawn: Illuminated Psalms* (Jewish Publication Society, \$75). Band has created lush visual interpretations of 36 of the most well-known psalms, incorporating both Hebrew and English texts. Each psalm is accompanied by Band's commentary on the illuminations and Arnold Band's literary analysis. The book is their second collaboration; *The Song of Songs: The Honeybee in the Garden* (JPS) was published in 2005 to universal acclaim.

Band's richly adorned pages grow out of the tradition of medieval illumination, where artistic elements possess multiple layers of meaning and symbolism. Her imagery is drawn from biblical midrash, from history and from the world around us. "You can build a picture that makes logical sense where every detail brings a whole other message," she says. "I wanted to provoke something of a dialogue between the readers and the psalmist."

I Will Wake the Dawn is a contemporary masterpiece, a visual feast for art and Judaica lovers. It makes a magnificent and meaningful gift for weddings, anniversaries and other special occasions. To learn more, go to www.jewishpub.org or call 800-234-3151.

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Jewish Women International 2006
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