

INTRODUCTION TO PSALMS

BEYOND LITERARY DEVICES

Arnold J. Band

The Book of Psalms, in both its original Hebrew and its numerous translations, is probably the best-known book of the Hebrew Bible. For more than two millennia it has captivated and inspired a wide variety of readers and worshipers. Subsequent attempts in the Western tradition to create moving liturgical poems, be they private or public devotions, have not replicated the expressive force of Psalms.

Existing literary analyses that explain the enduring influence of Psalms do not tell the whole story. Attributing their startling expressiveness to the “genius” of the Psalmist introduces a romantic term that explains little; the traditional attribution of the authorship of Psalms to David is more a salute to their majesty than an assertion of historical fact or the fixing of a date. After all, both the superscriptions (the initial verse of the psalm that often indicates authorship) and medieval commentaries assign the Psalms to different authors, in addition to David. We are therefore dealing not with individual authorship, but with a long and venerable tradition spanning over 500 years. To claim, on the other hand, that we can explain their unequaled expressive power by identifying a cluster of literary devices like metaphor and repetition may be helpful, even necessary, but does not offer a truly satisfying explanation. These same literary devices, after all, are present in many other types of sophisticated literary expression that are not as gripping as Psalms and thus fall short of explaining the uniqueness of the psalms.

We must, I believe, go beyond literary devices, beyond artfulness, beyond authorship, to recognize two salient characteristics of the Psalms. First, the Psalms embody a coherent view of a world governed by a single powerful, providential God, one who cares for human needs and attends to human prayer and praise. Second, we cannot escape the distinctive voice of the “Psalmist”—that is, the authors of the various Psalms, whoever they might be. This voice both speaks to an attentive God and allows the worshipful person to use the voice for his or her own communication.

It is important to remember that we refer to the author of Psalms or of individual psalms as “the Psalmist.” We do so deliberately, since—despite centuries of attributing authorship of Psalms to King David or, according to the superscription on many psalms, to other authors—modern scholarship has long concluded that we can never prove Davidic authorship of the Psalms. Similarly, we cannot date most psalms on the basis of internal evidence—the only evidence we have. (The famous Psalm 137, “By the waters of Babylon,” is a possible exception.) It is more usual today, and more fruitful, to treat the Book of Psalms as a long and venerable tradition of composition starting, perhaps, at the end of the second millennium B.C.E. and extending even to the Dead Sea Scrolls in the first century B.C.E. The authors of various psalms might be anonymous—hence we call them merely “psalmists”—but they were very faithful to the powerful literary tradition they inherited and practiced with consummate skill.

In order to penetrate the mystery of psalmic expression and understand the dynamic power of the psalms, we will look at some of their key literary components: clear, direct imagery; rhythmic balance; and a deft use of the verbless declarative sentence. We begin by analyzing the basic unit, the simple psalmic utterance, found in the best-known verse of Psalms, the first verse of Psalm 23 (without the added superscription: A Psalm of David [*mizmor le-David*]): “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want” (*’Adonai ro’i, lo’ eḥsor*). The four-word (in Hebrew) declaration comprises two 2-word balanced phrases that, in turn, comprise the kernel of Psalms—and much more. In “the LORD [is] my shepherd,” the speaker declares that there is a

specific LORD (*'Adonai*), and that *'Adonai* has a providential relationship to the speaker: *'Adonai* is his shepherd. The metaphor “shepherd” is very simple, traditional, and accessible to all, shepherds and urban dwellers alike. The LORD is specific, one, providential—in brief, the monotheistic God who emerges in the Hebrew Bible in the first millennium B.C.E. The speaker clearly believes in this providential God, since he can immediately state unambiguously: “I shall not want.”

The logical sequence is inescapable. The Hebrew actually says, in two words: *'Adonai ro'i*, *'Adonai* my-shepherd (with the possessive suffix). This first phrase in Hebrew has no verb, since there is no present tense of the verb “to be” in the Hebrew Bible. The union of “God” and “my-shepherd” is close: they are semantically united and charged. Furthermore, the connection with the second phrase, “I shall not want” (*lo 'ehsor*), is declarative, not hypothetical. The speaker does not say: “*If* the LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.” There is no “if” here, but rather a declarative sentence with two parts, the second a result of the first. Finally, the simple grammar implies a profound meaning: while the LORD exists and is providential, the LORD is not alone in the world, but is accompanied by the speaker who declares his trust in the LORD.

Simple yet forceful, straightforward yet complex, this four-word declaration speaks to anyone for whom there is a monotheistic, providential God. To show how this basic statement can be developed into a longer, more complex and integrated psalm, we move to Psalm 8, which has also inspired one of the illuminations in this volume:

O LORD, our LORD,
 how majestic is Your name throughout the earth.
 You who have covered the heavens with Your splendor!
 From the mouths of infants and sucklings
 You have founded strength on account of Your foes
 to put an end to enemy and avenger.
 When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
 the moon and the stars that You set in place,
 what is man that You have been mindful of him,
 mortal man that You have taken note of him,
 that You have made him little less than divine,
 and adorned him with glory and majesty.
 You have made him master over Your handiwork,
 laying the world at his feet,
 sheep and oxen, all of them,
 and wild beasts, too;
 the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea,
 whatever travels the paths of the seas.
 O LORD, our LORD, how majestic is Your name throughout the earth!

Psalm 8 begins like a classic example of a psalm of praise, marveling at God’s majesty and power as manifested in the heavens, and beginning and ending with the same verse. About halfway through the psalm, however, attention abruptly turns from God to human beings, from the majesty of God to the wonders of humankind. While the psalm is rich in the traditional literary devices found in most psalms and in much of biblical Hebrew poetry—such as concrete imagery, repetitions, and parallel verses (in which the second of two-verse couplets echoes the first in both rhythm and meaning)—it is distinguished by its coherence based on the twofold logic of wonder: humankind wonders at the splendors of creation, and within it is the marvel of mortal man, only a “little less than divine.”

The speaker begins by reciting his awe at the presence of creation, specifically the heavens with its moon and stars, but then uses this awe, which implies the insignificance of all humankind (including the speaker), to raise the challenging question: “What is man that You have been mindful of him?” In other words, why should the magnificent God bother with insignificant man, so clearly puny in comparison with the awe-inspiring heavens? Yet we see that God obviously has, since humankind has been given mastery of all God’s living creations. God has endowed humankind with great gifts, has made humans “little less than divine.” The psalm praises God’s majesty in the opening verse (2) and the closing verse (10), but attributes a similar quality to humankind in verse 6. (The Hebrew *hod* [glory] in verses 2 and 10 is echoed in a close synonym, *hadar* [majesty], in verse 6.) Man’s majesty is exemplified by his mastery over God’s handiwork, specifically over all the living beings on earth: animals, birds, and fish. And yet, after expressing his wonder at the majesty of humankind, the Psalmist closes this psalm by repeating the opening verse: “O LORD, our LORD, how majestic is Your name throughout the earth!” God’s majesty is thus first exemplified by the heavens, in their splendor, but then by the creation of man who is, in himself, majestic since he has been chosen by God over all other creatures, and has been endowed with the gifts of mastery. This complex, comparative structure exemplifies God’s choosing man, a privilege that implies a close, dynamic relationship.

Psalm 8 thus presents a basic problem of monotheism—which insists that there is only one creating and ruling God, who really does not need human beings—together with its solution. If the world has been created and governed by one omnipotent God, what place is there for humankind? The solution, as we have seen, is relatively simple and involves the comforting notion of a providential God who privileges humankind. Far more difficult, it would seem, is the problem of evil: how does one understand the problem of human suffering in such a world? While this problem has vexed the adherents of monotheism for centuries, and still vexes them, it seems that it is not an acute problem for the Psalmist. Certainly in Psalms we encounter an awareness of enemies and of national catastrophe, and a fear of abandonment. All these are accompanied by deep anguish, but they seem to be temporary situations that evoke fervent prayer and lead to ultimate help. Note the despair in the familiar verses of Psalm 22:

My God, my God,
why have You abandoned me;
why so far from delivering me
and from my anguished roaring? (v. 2)

After many moving verses, this same speaker can say in verse 25:

For He did not scorn, He did not spurn
the plea of the lowly
He did not hide His face from him;
when he cried out to Him, He listened.

In these moments, God seems to be absent and the speaker yearns for His presence. Significantly, the Psalmist has no words for “presence” or “absence,” abstract concepts developed in ancient Greece. He speaks of God’s “face” and God’s “hiding His face” from him. Note the standard formula in Psalm 13:

How long, O LORD; will You ignore me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me? (v. 2)

Just as God can hide His face, He can reveal His face. God listens to supplications and returns to help the petitioner.

The concreteness of the situation, the “hidden face” (*hester panim*) and its return to human vision, is characteristic of the world of the Psalmist, for whom God is addressed as an intimate “you” and not the You (capitalized) that we ordinarily use in English translation. In a world not yet diluted by abstractions, the speaker’s voice can more readily be assimilated by any believer who chooses to recite the psalms for his own needs. The sophisticated imagery, the stirring rhythms, and reinforcing repetitions all affect the verses, but the voice of the Psalmist resounds beyond them through his fresh belief in this providential God.

In preparing for my literary introduction to each psalm, I have read many commentaries, both medieval and modern. While I have gained much from their insights, the formulation of each analysis is in my voice and my responsibility. I have tried to address both the initiate to Psalms and the experienced reader; those who have no Hebrew knowledge and those familiar with the original text. Each psalm invites its specific response; although they all share the same glorious tradition, each is unique. Finally, despite my detailed analyses of the workings of literary devices in these devotional poems, there still remain areas of literary response that are beyond literary devices.

Throughout the entire Book of Psalms, we are immersed in poetic language that suggests a sophisticated poetic tradition, but this does not explain the uncanny durability of the psalms throughout the ages. The psalmists captured and rendered a wide range of religious sentiments that are perennially relevant and meaningful to a worshiper. Above all, they believed in a caring, predictable God who was open to the supplication of human beings, God’s own creatures, yet expected them to worship God. The composition and recitation of psalms was not merely an aesthetic exercise. It was an act of devotion.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ILLUMINATIONS

WHY ILLUMINATE PSALMS?

Debra Band

Why should we—artist, scholar, and reader—invest our time in an illuminated book of Psalms? How can a picture rendered in parchment, ink, paint, and gold help us better imagine these verses, help us reach back to the original inspiration of the biblical Psalms and find contemporary expressions for these awe-inspiring poetic verses? The illuminations herein present a visual midrash, an interpretation, of the selected psalms, which I hope will give not only aesthetic pleasure in their shimmering gold and color, but also a means of recapturing the sense of awe embodied in these verses.

Why do we relate to the psalms? Let us examine how we, living in a world that seeks human rather than divine intervention to solve our problems, relate to ancient Temple liturgy. In his introduction to this book, Arnold Band discusses the permeating faith inherent in the tradition of the Psalmist, the search for the face of the Divine. Today we search for human solutions and cures to countless problems, but we still often look for assurance that the “strong hand and outstretched arm” will pull us to safety. And so—although in a process accomplished by the second century C.E., Judaism had transformed Temple ritual into a portable world of prayer, learning and law, and since the days of the Church Fathers Christianity has found “Jerusalem” in the human heart, rather than in a single geographic location—we still place the 150 Psalms at the heart of our religious rituals and private prayer.

Abraham Joshua Heschel examined the meaning of awe expressed in the Psalms and throughout the Hebrew Bible:

Awe enables us to perceive in the world intimations of the divine, to sense in small things the beginning of infinite significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple; to feel in the rush of the passing the stillness of the eternal.¹

However profoundly the psalms plumb the tie between humanity and the Divine, however powerfully they convey awe of the Divine Presence in the human world, their profundity and emotion tend to become muffled when we encounter them in their regular ritual context. In traditional Jewish homes, for instance, Psalm 126 is sung immediately before the Grace after Meals on Sabbath and festivals, but how often do we pause from enjoying the presence of family and friends at our tables to focus on the dream of returning to Zion? In Sabbath morning synagogue services, the Torah scrolls are returned to the ark accompanied by the rhythmic singing of Psalm 29, but who among us really imagines earthquakes, storms, and lightning-split trees? When do we truly feel the awe of God’s power embodied in those lines? We recite *Tehillim*² on behalf of the ill, entreating the LORD to heal and save, yet how often do we take the time and emotional energy to probe the essence of the literal words and contemplate why we invoke those particular poems to pray for healing?

RELEVANCE OF THE PSALMS

This book offers an opportunity to consider the psalms more deliberately and to realize the strengthening power of their words by offering the verses in the context of an illuminated book. In Arnold Band’s introduction to the psalms as a literary form we have already probed their lasting appeal. Now, let us explore what a visual interpretation adds to our appreciation of these powerful poems. In particular, what does an illuminated manuscript offer that other visual presentations do not?

At the simplest level, pictures catch our eye, encouraging us to stop for a moment and consider the image and the words that inspire it. Once we slow down to consider both text and painting, the choice of visual imagery invites a reverie of thoughts related to the literal text of the psalm. Taken together, the images chosen for each illumination create a visual midrash,³ an interpretation exploring not only the psalm's roots in the early monotheism of the first millennium B.C.E. in the days of the Temple in Jerusalem—the original inspiration for the psalm—but also that psalm's import in our own lives, in our own world—its contemporary meanings. I hope you will be drawn to contemplate the imagery and interpret its messages on a personal level. Thus, while scholars have described Psalms as an inner *dialogue* between Psalmist and Almighty, we are encouraged here to participate in a three-way *conversation* between Psalmist, God, and ourselves.⁴

Through this inner conversation, we may articulate our emotional or spiritual challenges; we may meditate upon our own relationship with the Divine; and, if we accept the availability of the Almighty, we may confront the awe of the Divine, gaining confidence that we are not alone in resolving our problems.⁵ For instance, in a world of often-nihilistic popular culture, where the challenges of raising a healthy family may seem overwhelming, Psalm 128 celebrates the serenity and satisfaction—in Jewish tradition, *naḥas*—of a flourishing family. In the illuminations of that psalm, the eagles nesting in the olive tree may remind the viewer of biblical and midrashic ideas that God offers a model of the perfect parent, protecting the Chosen People as an eagle protects its young. While this allusion draws upon fairly obscure textual sources, the accompanying commentary on the illumination explains the image.

The specific choice of visual images enables us to relate Psalms not only to the early monotheism of the first millennium B.C.E., not only to the days of the Temple in Jerusalem, but also to contemporary thought and circumstances. By weaving together words and pictures we may draw the ancient words more directly into the world of our own experience. By relating the psalms to our own world that we can experience an immediate, personal response of dialogue and emotion.

The fusion of words and pictures, however, can help us draw the ancient text more directly into our own world by provoking an immediate, personal response. It is through the specific visual images chosen for each psalm—whose choice was indeed an *intellectual* decision—that the psalm's *emotional* content can be expressed. In Psalm 128, a scene of a flourishing garden conjures up the joy that the psalm promises the parent. In illuminating Psalm 8, I fill an explosive and whirling star form with imagery and verses drawn from modern science, from Sophocles and Shakespeare, to celebrate the extraordinary abilities that God has bestowed upon humanity and to evoke our awe at God's infinitely greater power.

A visual interpretation, a visual midrash of the psalms can convey these complex thoughts with intellectual and emotional immediacy. Textual commentaries offer an important key to understanding the value of the poems; indeed, the insights of diverse commentaries on the psalms will play an important role in the visual interpretation of these texts. Modern literary analysis such as that offered for each psalm in this collection offers an essential key to revealing the import of the words not in the minds of later commentators, but in the minds of the poets who wrote them. But although one can surround the psalm with verbal commentary alone, how much more immediately emotive, how much more thought-provoking, how much richer an experience may be realized through such a visual interpretation!

THE TRADITION OF MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATION

The illuminated manuscript offers a kind of *fusing* other than that of words and pictures, mentioned above; it offers a means to bridge the gap between contemporary experience and earlier religious traditions. Illuminated manuscripts grew from an age long before our era of instant word-processing and electronic communication, and are common to the traditions of both Judaism and Christianity (as well as other religions). Our cultural landscapes have been decorated by illuminated *haggadot*,⁶ Bibles, and prayer books for

over 1000 years. Medieval Christianity, in particular, developed the tradition of the illuminated Psalter, of which many celebrated examples have survived. When both contemporary and ancient imagery complement a text in the traditional form of an illuminated manuscript, as in this book, we can experience a fusion of our communal past, our present, and—if we are praying—perhaps even our hopes for the future.

The act of looking at an illuminated manuscript has been described as an “intimate experience,” and as such may lend itself to this contemplative inner conversation in a different and perhaps better way than media such as wall-mounted paintings or more modern typeset, illustrated books. Unlike the wall-mounted painting, the illuminated manuscript (or, more often, its reproduction) can be held in one’s lap and quietly contemplated at close range, shared with others, or read privately in the time and place of the reader’s choice. A more standard typeset, illustrated book may, of course, also be read at any time or place, shared or privately. The isolated illustration floating in or next to a sea of black typeset lettering provides a break from the text, but it is still not unified with it, and requires separate concentration. In contrast, the illuminated manuscript, with its richly fused words and images, allows the reader’s attention to focus closely on both simultaneously. Further, the entanglement of text and picture sets up provocative tensions that can trigger unexpected insights or feelings. In these ways, an illuminated manuscript offers the viewer an intimate intellectual, emotional and aesthetic experience that supports the inner *conversation* among the reader, the Psalmist, and the Divine.

CRAFTING THE VISUAL INTERPRETATION

Readers of my earlier work, *The Song of Songs: The Honeybee in the Garden*, may already be acquainted with my approach to composing visual midrashim, or interpretations, of biblical text. As I wrote in that work, I consider it essential that any given scene begin with a recognizable representation from the world of our own experience. Following Erwin Panofsky’s exposition of “disguised symbolism” in the work of the medieval northern-European masters “masters” (most notably Van Eyck, a reproduction of whose *Arnolfini Marriage Portrait* has hung over my worktable since college days), I choose and arrange objects in ways that make logical sense in the narrative setting. I draw my imagery from diverse sources: from midrash, from other biblical texts whose meaning relates to the psalm at hand, and from modern society and science. While the overall painting usually creates a coherent, easily understood physical reality, parsing the symbolism of individual items within it reveals a more complex world of ideas. Just as the literary analysis you will find for each psalm in this book probes the structure and contemporary significance of the literal verses to help us appreciate the subtle nuance of the psalm, my commentary accompanying each psalm’s pair of illuminations explains the iconography of the paintings. It is these images and ideas that compose the full symbolic meaning of the paintings. It is these images and ideas that, I hope, will help us crystallize and articulate our reactions to the psalms.

WITHIN THE BOOK

We chose an anthology of 36 psalms for illumination in this volume. The 36 illuminated here form a representative sampling of the emotional and spiritual expressions embodied in the 150 psalms. This anthology includes psalms of personal and communal rejoicing and gratitude, and prayers for healing and redemption in times of desperation, including some of the psalms singled out by the famous 18th-century Hasidic master, Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav. The anthology incorporates psalms expressing the love of and longing for Jerusalem; psalms included in daily, Sabbath, and festival liturgies for both public synagogue and private home use, including the entire *Hallel* cycle; several Psalms of the Day; psalms included in mourning rites; the introductory psalms for the Grace after Meals; and finally, a number of psalms from which Jewish tradition derives popular folk songs sung at weddings and other life-cycle celebrations. The commentary materials for each set of illuminations mark the particular place of the given psalm in Jewish tradition.

Each psalm is illuminated in both Hebrew and English. The translation included along with the original Hebrew is the New Jewish Publication Society translation (NJPS) published in 1985; however, for the sake of

resonance for those accustomed to other translations derived from the King James Version (KJV), in some cases where the NJPS translation differs significantly from the KJV, and fidelity to the Hebrew is not sacrificed, words drawn from the KJV or the older JPS (OJPS) translation published in 1917 have been substituted. These substitutions are noted within those psalms' commentary materials.

Each psalm is accompanied by two commentaries. The first commentary is a concise literary analysis by Arnold Band of the psalm at hand, presented in terms accessible to the educated layperson; full appreciation of a psalm's subtlety and power often depends upon appreciating its nuances of word choice, grammar, and structure. Following each literary analysis is my commentary on the psalm's illuminations. The imagery draws not only upon the psalm, but also from a wide range of biblical and midrashic texts, poetry, and the fields of archeology and science. Because these sources may be unfamiliar to many readers, I include my commentaries to increase your appreciation of the richness of the psalm and its visual interpretation.

The choices and interpretations of the psalms included in this volume reflect the Jewish tradition within which we—the scholar and the artist—live and work. However, just as psalms occupy a central role in Jewish liturgy and many home and life-cycle rituals, so are they valued in the other Abrahamic religions. Islam holds the Psalms of David, known in that tradition as *Zabur*, among its sacred texts, although it does not incorporate them into liturgy. Psalms have formed the core of Christian prayer since its inception. Jesus, as a Jewish rabbi, quoted Psalms liberally in his teachings, and the earliest Church Fathers founded Christian prayer on Psalms. Monastic movements recite the full Book of Psalms in regular cycles, and the medieval traditions of psalters, breviaries, and books of hours, and indeed Gregorian chant, are based on readings of the psalms. In the High Middle Ages, the Psalter was regarded as the only biblical text that a Christian layperson might read freely on his or her own, and thus was used as the basic text for teaching reading skills.⁸ At the outset of the Reformation, the Psalms remained key texts for Luther and Calvin and became the basis of Protestant prayer and source material for hymns. A fervent and well-read Lutheran, Bach's *Passion* settings are largely based on texts from Psalms. The very first book published in the American Colonies was *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre*, known commonly as *The Bay Psalm Book* and produced in Massachusetts in 1640.

It is outside the scope of this work to explore the interpretation of the psalms within Christianity. However, given their importance within Christian traditions, we observe here the manner in which each of our chosen psalms figure in Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox liturgies. Thus, the commentary materials for each illuminated psalm will present a brief discussion of its place in Christian liturgical traditions. We should note that every branch of Christianity also prescribes private lay readings of psalms for various occasions (as does Judaism), as well as complex monastic cycles in Catholic and Orthodox traditions, but here we treat public liturgical reading and chanting. Again, given the diversity of these traditions, the scope of this work allows mention only of those uses of the psalms familiar to laypeople, without exploring historical development and regional or sectarian variations or monastic custom. The commentary materials mention the use of the whole, or the greater part of the psalm at hand, rather than the inclusion of individual verses or phrases in prayer services. The Roman Catholic Lectionary has been the primary source for the Catholic tradition; the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and the Revised Common Lectionary the sources for Protestant custom;⁹ and the Orthodox Divine Office for the Orthodox churches. Undoubtedly, distilling so many complex practices and traditions into brief statements requires judgment that may result in apparent generalizations or omissions, and I beg the reader's understanding. I hope these discussions will help all of us to appreciate the common inspiration, confidence, and comfort that our communities find in these glorious poems that we share.

Finally, I hope that this volume will not only give aesthetic pleasure, but help us all “be strong and of good courage,” in the words of Moses and the Psalmist, as we pursue our three-way conversation between ourselves, the Psalmist, and God.

THE USE OF GENDER LANGUAGE IN THE BOOK

You will note that the translations and commentary materials often refer to God as “He” or “Him.” We hope that you will understand that no slight is intended to the gender-sensitive reader by the use of the masculine pronoun. Rather, for the sake of stylistic grace and consistency we have followed the example set by the NJPS translation, using masculine pronouns to refer to the Divine when necessary.

- 1 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1955), 75.
- 2 *Tehillim* is the Hebrew name for the Book of Psalms; the word is a form of the Hebrew verb “to praise.”
- 3 Midrash is the collective term for Rabbinic commentary on the meaning of biblical verses, wherein a problematic word or phrase is considered in the light of similar phrasing elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, in other stories or legends, in written or oral tradition, or even in the commentator’s own experience. Most of the midrash included here was compiled between the first and eighth centuries C.E., in Palestine and Babylon.
- 4 For a discussion of the dialogic character of the psalms, please see “Psalms: The Limits of Subjectivity,” in Harold Fisch, *Poetry with a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988).
- 5 Harold Kushner explores the notion that the LORD accompanies and supports humankind through its struggles in his book, *The LORD Is My Shepherd: Healing Wisdom of the Twenty-Third Psalm* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).
- 6 The haggadah (pl. *haggadot*) is the book that presents the ordered readings and rituals for the Passover seder, the ritual feast commemorating the Exodus from Egypt.
- 7 I thank Laura Kruger, curator of the Hebrew Union College Museum in New York, for this insight.
- 8 William L. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1993), 178.
- 9 The Revised Common Lectionary is used by Protestant churches across the world. In the United States, it is used by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Fellowship of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church. This information is provided by the Consultation on Common Texts, Documentation No. VI (ELLC 8-99), 2006.