

Out of the Depths: One Approach to Exploring a Psalm

(from "From the Depths: The Use of Psalms" by Simkha Y. Weintraub, in *Jewish Pastoral Care*, 1st Ed., p. 161-162; as adapted by Rabbi Susan Freeman)

1. Read the psalm through once out loud---and then once to yourself, quietly.
 2. Look for a section, sentence, phrase, or word that speaks to you, and circle it (SF: or note it).
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3. Chart the psalm's meaning:

- a. Can you identify two, three, or four distinct sections? Please mark and label them.
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- b. Are there distinct voices (psalmist, God, enemies, others)? Please label them.
(GM: We'll explore this in later weeks)
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- c. Can you summarize the "flow" of the psalm (e.g., "from pain to despair to searching to reaffirmation")? If so, please describe briefly:
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4. Do you experience something that is familiar? Where?
Verse(s) _____
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5. Where do you encounter difficulties in the psalm's meaning?
Verse(s) _____

- a. What is foreign to you? What needs clarification?

b. What would you eliminate (which words, verses, ideas)?

6. If you were asked to amplify or to develop one piece of this psalm, what might you write? Feel free to offer two or three lines.

7. Last, if you had to entitle this psalm, as you would a poem, what would you call it? (Feel free to use something from the psalm or from outside it.)