

Praise for the LORD's Goodness.

A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day. [NASB]

92 It is good to give thanks to **the LORD**
 And to sing praises to Your name, Most High;
²To declare Your goodness in the morning
 And Your faithfulness by ^[a]night,
³^[b]With the ten-stringed lute and ^[c]with the harp,
^[d]With resounding music on the lyre.
⁴For **You, LORD**, have made me joyful by ^[e]what You have done,
 I will sing for joy over the works of Your hands.
⁵How great are Your works, LORD!
 Your ^[f]thoughts are very deep.
⁶**A stupid person** has no knowledge,
 Nor does a **foolish person** understand this:
⁷When **the wicked** sprouted up like grass
 And **all who did injustice** flourished,
 It *was only* that they might be destroyed forevermore.
⁸But **You, LORD**, are on high forever.
⁹For, behold, Your enemies, LORD,
 For, behold, Your enemies will perish;
 All who do injustice will be scattered.
¹⁰But You have exalted **my** horn like *that of the wild ox*;
 I have ^[g]been anointed with fresh oil.
¹¹And my eye has looked at my enemies,
 My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.
¹²**The righteous person** will ^[h]flourish like the palm tree,
 He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
¹³Planted in the house of the LORD,
 They will flourish in the courtyards of our God.
¹⁴They will still ^[i]yield fruit in advanced age;
 They will be ^[j]full of sap and very green,
¹⁵To ^[k]declare that **the LORD** is just;
He is my rock, and there is no malice in Him.

Hebrew and English:

https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16313/jewish/Chapter-92.htm

Recited in Hebrew:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA_uezSYqqA

Sung in Messianic worship:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3XrPYiOiZY>

(5:20)

Psalm 92 transliterated:

<https://biblehub.com/wlct/psalms/92.htm>

Footnotes

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|---|---|
| a. Psalm 92:2 Lit <i>nights</i> | g. Psalm 92:10 Or <i>become moist</i> |
| b. Psalm 92:3 Lit <i>Upon</i> | h. Psalm 92:12 Lit <i>sprout</i> |
| c. Psalm 92:3 Lit <i>Upon</i> | i. Psalm 92:14 Or <i>thrive in</i> |
| d. Psalm 92:3 Lit <i>Upon</i> | j. Psalm 92:14 Lit <i>fat and</i> |
| e. Psalm 92:4 Lit <i>Your working</i> | k. Psalm 92:15 Or <i>show forth</i> |
| f. Psalm 92:5 Or <i>purposes</i> | |

THE LITURGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF PSALMS IN JUDAISM: Demonstrated with Samples from Psalms 90-106, with a Special Focus on Psalm 92, Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat

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Overview (Boeckler examines two things):

- (1) Use of the Psalms in the liturgy
- (2) Understanding of Psalm 92 specifically in Jewish liturgy

“The article shows how a text that originally had no relationship with Shabbat **became**, *thanks to its headline*, an important study text about the essence of Shabbat” (70). (See Chabad ref.)

She calls Psalm 92 “probably the best-known psalm in the prayer book” (70).

(1) Use of Psalms in the Liturgy

- a. “Fifteen of the seventeen psalms of the fourth book of Psalms (Pss. 90-106) have core functions in the Jewish liturgy. At least eleven ... may even be recited daily or at least weekly” (70).
- b. “The extensive and prominent liturgical usage of the psalms in the fourth book of Psalms is partly due to the fact that according to a well-known tradition not only the first one, Psalm 90, was written by Moses as it explicitly states in the heading ... but also the ten succeeding psalms” David *rediscovered* them and incorporated them. So...Mosaic authorship/special authority (73)
- c. In rabbinic Judaism – regarded as prophetic texts (“material to study and thus to be ‘said’, not to be ‘prayed’), not as prayers (73).
- d. Psalms “did not form the liturgy in rabbinic times after the Temple was destroyed” (73).
- e. “tradition of using Ps. 92 on Friday evenings started in Eretz Israel during the fifth century CE” (74).
- f. Karaites (9th century CE) – rejected oral Torah; their liturgy was biblical (not Talmudic); used psalms for prayer/liturgy
- g. Rav Saadya Gaon (9th cent., defending rabbinic view) - Psalms were to be used as “study texts” (74) before the morning service.
- h. Medieval times – further psalms added to the liturgy, incl. Ps 92; (74)

(2) Psalm 92 in Jewish Liturgy

Jewish liturgical uses of Psalm 92 was influenced by:

- General attitude toward psalms in Jewish liturgy
 - Popular interpretations in the Midrash (Jewish legends)
 - Kabbalistic views
 - Its meaning within *halakah* (religious law)
 - The music commonly attributed to it within the service
- **General attitude toward psalms in Jewish liturgy**
 - a. Its **liturgical context** is created by the psalm's ...
 - i. “**place** within the prayer book” (71)
 - ii. “**preconceptions** about the text that someone has when reciting this piece of liturgy” (71)
 - iii. “**performance** of the text, which creates emotional understanding” (71)
 - **Popular interpretations in the Midrash (textual interpretations/Jewish legends)**
 - b. Prophecy in that it is about the fate of the wicked in the world to come (75)
 - i. About the Shabbat we celebrate
 - ii. About the Shabbat (rest) “when all evil will be put to rest” (75)
 - c. Attributed by Rashi to Adam (Eve?) (75); Moses renewed it in his name. (Adam was created “on the eve of Shabbat” (75); Midrash on it tells of the **hours of Adam’s life leading up to Shabbat, and that Shabbat and Adam together give thanks unto God (for Adam did not die after all but was expelled)**. (76)
 - d. Psalm 92 **does not mention Shabbat at all** (76); One of “ten songs of redemption” (76); **Adam recites it when Shabbat protects him**.
 - e. “Psalm 92 understood this way thus depicts **Shabbat as a celebration of forgiveness and renewal, a situation experienced in the past and the reason why we are alive today. It is the song of hope for humanity**” (76)
 - **Kabbalistic views**
 - f. Kabbalat Shabbat (series of 6 psalms recited or sung at the beginning of Friday night prayers to welcome Shabbat). Developed by 16th c. Kabbalists.
 - g. Psalm 92 and 93 appear as the seventh psalm recited.
 - h. Psalms 92 and 93, regarded as a unit, with Ps. 93 depicting the future world as a continuation of Ps. 92” (77).
 - i. Kabbalistic mystics took literally the Talmudic welcoming of Shabbat “as if she were a queen” (b/c of Talmudic rabbis dressing in fine garments to welcome Shabbat) (77)
 - j. “Shabbat is the day when unity prevails over fragmentation. At some point the two traditions were mixed and Ps. 29 was added to the kingship psalms, so that a unit of six

psalms was then recited, one psalm to repair the lack of spiritual awareness during each day of the week” (77)

- k. Hymn *Lekha Dodi* comes before Psalm 92 – seventh psalm – The hymn is a “bridge between profane and holy, between fragmentation and unity, so that Psalm 92 ... is truly Shabbat as God’s mystical presence” (77).
- l. Changed by later German liberal Judaism and modern Progressive congregations (77-78), focusing on “messianic times, hope for the people and the land of Israel and redemption” (78).
- **Its meaning within halakah (religious law)**
 - m. (19th cent) Recital of Ps 92 – official beginning of Shabbat (78)
 - n. Mourners enter first, hear words of Ps 92 – marks the end of their mourning
 - o. Future true Shabbat – all evil vindicated
- **The music commonly attributed to it within the service**
 - p. Traditionally – no instruments used on Shabbat (78)
 - q. Ps 92 thus experienced as “a marker of a difference...the first prayer suddenly chanted a cappella in the Friday night service” (78).
 - r. “style of performance stresses the communal aspect of Shabbat as a day of celebration” (79).
 - s. “In short, Psalm 92 may be used as a whole or in parts, aloud with fancy tunes or traditional *nusach* [text, version], said, mumbled or in silence—this is the decision of the leader of prayer in the given moment or a preparation team, based on the local traditions of the specific community. When experienced in the service, Ps. 92 thus presents Shabbat majestic, meditative, silent or celebrative as a community united in song” (79).

Conclusion (Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz explaining the meaning of Ps. 92):

“It is called a Sabbath Psalm not because it sings of the Sabbath and extols its virtues, but because it represents the **kind of thoughts** which are liable to enter and possess the thoughts of that person who **observes the Sabbath in its true spirit**. ... It is only when the Sabbath comes, and he is relieved of material cares, when he makes of the day a **day of recreation** that in the **serenity and tranquil peace of that blessed day** he can give himself over to **meditation and contemplation**. It is then that he can sing of the **greatness of God** and of the **ultimate triumph of right and justice**. ... declare that the Lord is **upright**, ... He can **attune himself to the spirit of God and enter into communion with him**, and **spiritually refreshed and strengthened in his faith, face the future with confidence and trust**. Therein much more than in the enforced abstention from work lies the true value of the Sabbath of the Lord” (80).

Discuss:

- How does the biblical text “acquire new meanings” by the way it is used liturgically? (71)
What are some examples of this in Pentecostalism?
- How do Pentecostals view Shabbat? How might we view it differently based on this understanding of Psalm 92 within Jewish liturgy?