

# PRAYING with *Fire*

## PRAYER POINTS



## Tackling Psalms

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*I could picture the bubbies in the shtetl crying with their books of Psalms, but me?*

When my doctors were stumped for a diagnosis, the uncertainty was as scary as the physical symptoms. The tingling sensations in my body and the spine demyelination suggested a future of becoming wheelchair bound. My physicians narrowed it down to some variety of auto-immune disease, but not one expert could put a name on my condition.

I turned towards the spiritual side of illness with a little internet research. I called across the country to a rabbi I'd appreciated on an online learning site. Rabbi Yossi Mizrachi connected with me through a long, earnest conversation. He emphatically explained that I should say Psalms and cry. Whoa! I was dumbfounded. I could picture the bubbies in the shtetl crying with their books of Psalms, but me? "Yes," the rabbi urged. "You should recite Psalms and cry out to God. Prayers with tears are listened to."

The book of Psalms had always been a curious thing to me. I felt a certain fascination with the holy

book though I had never opened one. When my sister and I were going to college in New York, we used to see the Brooklyn girls on the subway mouthing their Psalms. We called them the “mumblers.”

Rabbi Mizrachi was urging me to become one of those mumblers. Would I try it?

My health challenge was an opportunity to tackle Psalms. I could give it a try and fervently plead with God for a healing. I wasn't going to count on a miracle, but it certainly couldn't hurt. By coming closer to God, whether or not, I recovered my health, my life and spirit would hopefully rise to a new and higher level.

## **One a Day**

As Providence would have it, I read an article about an international group campaigning to assist people in saying one chapter of Psalms a day. Now that sounded doable! I signed up immediately. My toes were officially in the water and I was about to immerse myself. I became a “One-A-Day” Psalm enthusiast.

The words of the Psalms slowly began to speak to me. And then the biggest surprise of all arrived. When high steroid medication caused me to be up at 4 AM, I could be found “mumbling” Psalms on the living room couch. And to my amazement, in a darkened house, in my ill state, the tears actually came. My heart reached out to God in a way I had never experienced. I actually appreciated my illness for this opportunity to connect to my Creator in a way I never had before.

As I became more familiar with the text, I adopted one thought from Psalms to help me through the worst discomfort of my illness. When I would rise from a sitting position, I often felt an electric type of shock going down one leg and I'd have to freeze in place for about a minute. As that pain subsided a warm feeling infused my other leg. These manifestations of my funky immune system were annoying and often painful, bringing tears to my eyes. I began reciting a few words from Psalm 52: “...the kindness of God is all day long,” I believed with my whole heart that God had a reason for sending me this pain and I would acknowledge it as a “kindness.” Looking on the bright side, I was actually grateful that my pain only lasted for one minute (even if it was 40 times a day). Saying these few words helped me take something unwelcome and turn it into a positive.

Eventually my disease (still undiagnosed) got under control with some powerful drugs, which I will likely have to take every day of my life. Though my immune system is being chemically suppressed, I feel remarkably wonderful. Whether the Psalms I said helped me heal, I can't tell you. But I can tell you that it has changed my life.

The messages are timeless, linking us to our people, heritage and God in a most unique way.

Every morning, before I say my morning prayers, I say my one Psalm for the day. Even though I've been doing this for over four years now, I never get tired or bored of it. The Psalms give me a chance to connect with God, in a personal way. King David's verses often touch my core, articulating the

words that I didn't even know I wanted to say. The messages are timeless, linking us to our people, heritage, and God in a most unique way.

If you've not yet experienced the power of Psalms, consider tackling them in your own meaningful way. Mumble a few of your own. Then keep at it. See what it can do for you and your relationship with the Almighty.