

MEDITATIONS FOR TAMMUZ



“Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.” Jeremiah 18:3-4

GRATITUDE AND PRAISE

¹ https://www.123rf.com/profile_olegdudko

“...remember how after crossing that sea, Miriam and the women danced with their timbrels, singing in gratitude to the One Who makes our transformation possible.

That's our job too: to sing out in praise. To cultivate gratitude and joy, without ignoring the things that are hard, either in our past, [in our present], or in our anticipated future. Miriam and the women are my role models in that. They'd experienced trauma and loss, they were on a journey with an unknown destination, they were carrying their whole lives on their backs -- and they danced anyway.”²

The following meditations are taken from *Created to Praise*, by Nancy Exley Morgan. Nancy leads the reader to a better understanding of praise as explored in the Hebrew words for praise: *hallel*, *shabach*, *tehillah*, *todah*, *yadah*, *barak*, and *zamar*.

Where necessary we are using G-d's name, the Tetragrammaton, as YHVH.

As we trust the LORD during this challenging month of Tammuz - may the Master Potter fashion us into vessels of *Tehillim* (Psalms).

TAMMUZ - 1

The heart attitude of the worshiper is central.

TAMMUZ - 2

When fully expressed, true praise results in higher worship, communion and fellowship with the Creator... This praise will build a throne for the “glory of G-d” to cover the earth “as the waters cover the sea,”³

TAMMUZ - 3

Y'shua was “born to praise.” His lineage was from the house of the tribe of Judah whose name means “praised and celebrated.” A very noteworthy concept is found in the Hebrew letters for the name *Yehudah* (Judah). The Hebrew word *Yehudah* is spelled with the letters of G-d's name YHVH but with a “D” or *Dalet* inserted [YHVDH]. The letter *Dalet* means door. So from the meaning of its letters, *Yehudah* means ‘Door to YHVH.’

Y'shua offers perfect praise to His Father from ‘before the foundation of the world’ to the “forever” of Revelation. He is “The Psalmist” and from eternity composed and inspired the Psalms that were to be sung. These *Tehillim* (Psalms) give man the perfect words to express his own thoughts, feelings, confessions and adoration to the Father.

TAMMUZ - 4

Hallel is the most frequently used word translated praise in the Bible. It is an exuberant and joyous word. Filled with celebration, it calls for total abandonment of self in praise and worship. *Hallel* is ascension. It is praise that translates us into higher

² Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

³ Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14; Habakkuk 3:3b

dimensions of His glory. We see a beautiful picture of *hallel* in the story of the prodigal's return to his Father.

TAMMUZ - 5

The world's *hallel* is not to be compared to the *hallel* manifested by heaven and the Father. It focuses on the earthly and temporal which fade and pass away. In contrast, the display of the believers' *hallel* to G-d is the testimony of a sold-out people who express their love and devotion to Him with their whole beings. Its revelation and demonstration extol Him. Its expression spotlights His wondrous works and mighty saving power. *Hallel* to the LORD has no end. We will *hallel* the eternal G-d and His everlasting life and power throughout eternity.

TAMMUZ - 6

As we read the psalms and put ourselves in the place of the psalmist, making the words our own, we offer our LORD the utmost *hallel*. We boast of Him, We glory in His presence. We declare the wonders of His person and proclaim His mighty works from the beginning of time into eternity. Taking our place in the symphony of praise, we join all creatures and all creation in *hallel* to our King.

TAMMUZ - 7

Shabach (pronounced sha-vakh') is the double-edge sword⁴ of praise. Its definition is two-fold. First, it means "to address in a loud tone, praise G-d in a loud tone, laud, triumph, commend, and glory." Secondly, *shabach* is used by G-d Himself toward His creation. The meaning is "to still, pacify, muzzle, grow calm, still the temper, the waves and the roar of the seas."

Shabach is a shout with a message! We shout our praises to the LORD; shout out His wondrous works to each other, loudly boast of His greatness to the next generation and command the storms to cease.

TAMMUZ - 8

Even now, Y'shua continues to minister *shabach* throughout eternity to His Father! He sits "at the right hand of" the Father, and invites us to join Him in forever exalting the LORD our G-d. True Kingdom praise is earth joined in heaven's expression of adoration before the throne! "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" becomes reality.

TAMMUZ - 9

The word *shabach* is spelled with the Hebrew letters *Sheen* (teeth, to destroy), *Bet* (house or tent) and *Chet* (a fence, a wall, to separate, to protect, to private, to fence off). There are times when the house and what is in it - the family and its possessions or the souls in its body (temple) - need to be protected from the evil without. But there are other times when what is in the house of the righteous - the love, the caring, the praise - needs to be revealed and released. When the fence or wall around the house is destroyed, the sound or shout of *shabach*-praise within can be heard.

This bears witness with a beautiful verse in Psalm 118. Verse 15 reads, "Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous."⁵ Destroying the fence or wall which makes

⁴ Psalm 149:6-9a

⁵ Psalm 118:15 NIV

the house private allows these shouts of joy and victory to be heard well beyond the bounds of the house. This lines up with the verses that tell us to *shabach* our praises to the LORD, to shout out His wondrous words to each other and to loudly boast of His greatness to the next generation. Let the voice of His praise be heard!

TAMMUZ - 10

Todah expresses the uninhibited simplicity and innocence of childlike devotion. A little child lifts up his hands to his mother or father in love and adoration, communicating by this act his desire to be picked up and lovingly held in his parent's arms. *Todah* is this same trusting and loving expression toward our heavenly Father; however, the Father receives our gesture love and trust with even more delight than our earthly parents. The LORD says, "...I will not forget you. Behold, I have indelibly imprinted a picture of you on the palm of each of My Hands."⁶

TAMMUZ - 11

Todah is the key to the gates of the Temple. "Enter His gates with *todah*!"⁷ The Psalmist instructs us in Psalm 100 to process through His gates and, with uplifted hands, sing songs of thanksgiving. G-d receives our *todah*, thanksgiving-praise, with clean hands, surrendered lives and pure hearts.

TAMMUZ - 12

Confession is an integral part of *todah*. At the dedication of the wall in Nehemiah, the first preparation was the cleaning and purification of the priests, the Levites, the people, the gates and the wall. This preparation is key to the offerings of *todah*. King David understood the necessity of confessing sin and coming into the LORD's presence with a righteous heart. He sang:
"I will wash my hands in innocence, so I will go about Your altar, O LORD, that I may proclaim with the voice of *todah*, and tell of all Your wondrous works."⁸

TAMMUZ - 13

Tav, *Vav*, *Dalet* and *Hey* are the Hebrew letters that make up *todah*. The first letter *Tav* means "the sign, the covenant." In antiquity it was drawn in the shape of a cross... The second letter of *todah* is *Vav* which denotes a "hook or nail" and is often used as a conjunction (e.g. "and"). The third letter of *todah* is *Dalet* and when drawn symbolizes a "door." Positioned at the end, *Hey* means "what comes from". Looking at the letters that make up the word *todah*, we can interpret its deeper message... *Todah*-praise is praise that springs from the revelation of all that He, The Door of Salvation, did for us. That is why we enter "in" with the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. *Todah* [the expression of gratitude] makes entrance into Salvation's gates.

TAMMUZ - 14

In chapter 43 Isaiah quotes G-d as saying, "This people that I have formed for Myself shall declare My *tehillah*."⁹ The two key words here are "formed" and "declare."

⁶ Isaiah 49:15b-16a Amplified Version

⁷ Psalm 100:4

⁸ Psalm 26:6-7

⁹ Isaiah 43:21

Formed¹⁰ in the Hebrew means “to press, squeeze, mold into a form, fashion, form, frame, potter and purpose.” Declare¹¹ is “to inscribe, write, count, account, recount, number, speak, talk, tell out and show forth.” Inserting these meanings into the context of the LORD’S statement, we may amplify it this way: We are being molded, fashioned and formed by our heavenly Potter for Himself into a vessel that will declare, proclaim, publish and show forth His *tehillah*!

TAMMUZ - 15

Tehillah is central to the worship of G-d...conceived before time, spoken into time and yet transcends time. Every situation we face and every emotion we feel are powerfully articulated in *Tehillim*.

TAMMUZ - 16

Creative *tehillah* is in nature itself. Our G-d as Creator expresses His renown and glory (*tehillah*) in our natural world. Spinning on its axis, the earth is a continual offering praise. The Psalmist sings, “Yahweh shall reign. The earth rejoices.”¹² We see the *tehillah* of creation in the changing seasons of nature. We view an earth that is a canvas of light and shadow. The heaven above us is a moving kaleidoscope. The sun shines brightly and then is intermittently hidden by rain-filled clouds, sleet and snows. Our days are punctuated with red-gold dawns and splendor-colored sunsets. We watch as tides flow in and out forming new edges of our seascapes. Nature’s beauty is an endless testament to His limitless art and design. The *tehillah* of nature is new every day. [All Creation sings the Creator’s praises.]

TAMMUZ - 17

As in His natural creation, so our lives move through season of spiritual growth. Our understanding of G-d, ourselves and the world around us is constantly changing. Through valleys of sorrow and weeping, through the joys of sudden revelation and mountain-top epiphanies, through ties of rock-bed faith and trails that shake, our G-d’s creative hand and blessings move through *tehillah* praise in our lives.

TAMMUZ - 18

It is significant that the first occurrence of the word translated “praise” in the scriptures is *yadah*. *Yadah* is variously translated as “praise, give thanks, confess, cast, shoot and throw.” This expression of worship is very powerful...Contained within *yadah* is the word *yad* (pronounced yahd) which denotes “a hand, the open one - indicating power, means, direction, power to deliver, strength, display of strength. The action of *yadah* - filling our hands with praise, thanksgiving or confession, we stretch out our hands and throw, cast or shoot our message to the LORD, releasing it to Him by opening our hands and giving it into His possession.

TAMMUZ- 19

We first encounter *yadah* in Genesis 29:33:

¹⁰ Hebrew - *Yatsar* (pronounced yah-tsar’)

¹¹ Hebrew - *Saphar* (pronounced sah-far’)

¹² Psalm 97:1a

“She (Leah) conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now I will praise (*yadah*) the LORD.’¹³ So she name him Judah [*Yehudah*] - meaning “celebrated, praised,” taken from the root word “*yadah*.”

Leah, Jacob’s wife, brought forth her fourth son Judah, her praise, to the G-d of all the earth. She cast him in birth upon the heavenly Father and named him for the very act of *yadah*. Leah was saying, “This time, instead of looking for the praise of my husband, I will cast in birth my praise and thanksgiving, my son, to G-d. My son will be celebrate and praised. He will receive *yadah*.” Not only did Judah receive praise but because of Leah’s praise-act, Judah became praise. Oh, the power of *yadah*!

TAMMUZ - 20

Yadah is also a vehicle of confessing sin. Like missiles that are aimed and launched to their target, our faults, misdeeds and sins are sent forth and released to G-d in *yadah*-confession! What a burden-lifter! [Let us raise our hands to Him in grateful praise!]

TAMMUZ - 21

The Hebrew letters that spell *yadah* are *Yud*, meaning “hand;” *Dalet*, meaning “door” and *Hey* meaning “to reveal” or “what comes from.” The letter *Yud* is a picture of the closed hand but when joined to *Dalet* becomes the word for “the open hand.” So “to give thanks,” “to praise” and “to confess” define what comes from or is revealed by the open hand. Remembering that *Hey* also means breath or spirit, we can picture the wind (breath) of the Holy Spirit carrying our *yadah* messages up to the LORD.

TAMMUZ - 22

The Hebrew word sometimes translated “praise” but most often translated “bless” is *barak* (pronounced bah-rak’). The Hebrew Lexicon defines it as: “kneel, bless, praise, kneel down, bless G-d, adore with bended knees, salute, greet, to be blessed, adored, prospered by G-d.”

Barak, as with other Hebrew words for praise, is communicated by both a physical posture and a message of the soul. Carried to the LORD by the sound waves of the human voice, it is accompanied by the thoughts and emotions of the human heart. Here we see an expression of the whole person - spirit, soul and body. We kneel down before the LORD with our body, acknowledging Him as the Creator and giver of all good gifts. By this act of humbling ourselves, we exalt Him to the highest place, giving Him glory, honor, praise and adoration from the deepest places of our souls and spirits.

TAMMUZ - 23

Blessing begins and ends with G-d. Having created the world and all that is in it, He then blessed it and called it “good.”¹⁴ In blessing man He enabled him to be a blessing both to Himself and to others. Like a snowball rolling down a mountain gathering more and more snow and more and more momentum, blessing begets blessing and a circle of blessing is set in motion by G-d - Him to us, us to Him, us to others, others to Him.

TAMMUZ - 24

Barak is made of the Hebrew letters *Bet* (“B”), *Reysh* (“R”) and *Kaf* (K or Ch) ...The letter *Bet* is a picture of a tent or house and means “house.” *Reysh* (“R”) is a picture of the head of a man and means “a head” and is also used to mean a “man, a person, the

¹³ Genesis 29:35

¹⁴ Genesis 1:31

highest, the supreme, the first, or the sum.” When *Bet* and *Reysh* are put together it spells the word for son (*bar*).” The son is the “house of man” or the “man from within the house.” *Kaf* is a picture of the palm (open hand) or wing and means “to cover, to open, allow.” Related to the Hebrew word for “knee (*berek*),” *barak* speaks of knelling and thus blessing, as a son to a father, or a father to a son. The word picture of a son kneeling before his father covered by the father’s open hand. The father’s outstretched hand denotes protection and the fact that it is open means that good things are given and allowed.

The word *bar* also means “mature.” *Reysh* and *Kaf* put together spell the Hebrew word “*rak*,” meaning “tenderness.” Putting *rak* together with *bar*, *barak* is the “son of tenderness, to treat as a mature son, with tenderness.” This speaks to me of intimate relationship between a father and a mature son, one who receives his father’s wisdom and stays in relationship with him. It is from this intimacy that first our Father G-d blesses us and we in turn bless Him for who He is and what He does, both universally and personally.

TAMMUZ - 25

After David *hallel-ed* G-d (and pretended madness) before his enemy, Abimelech called him a madman and drove him away. David’s response was to pen Psalm 34. Delivered through the power of praise, his first words were, “I will bless (*barak*) the LORD at all times, His praise (*tehillah*) shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast (*halle*) in the LORD; the humble shall hear of it and be glad.”¹⁵

Narrowly escaping death, yet miraculously saved by G-d, David’s first utterance was to vow to *barak* the Father at all times, and let perpetual praise reside in his mouth!...Instead of responding in fear, David chose to praise G-d when his life was threatened. We can do the same. If we practice a lifestyle of blessing G-d, we will know Him more intimately and be able to trust Him in the most difficult situation - even unto death.

TAMMUZ - 26

Zamar (pronounced zah-mar) is the playing of musical instruments, accompanied by the voice, in celebration and praise to G-d. The Hebrew Lexicon defines it as: “Make music in praise to G-d; pipe, play on a reed, make music, melody, instrumental accompaniment, of playing musical instruments.” Strong’s Concordance states it this way: “to touch the strings or parts of a musical instrument and play on it.” *Zamar* is variously translated as “praise,” “give praise,” “make melody,” “sing,” “sing forth praises” and “sing psalms.” Amazingly, none of the English words or phrases used to translate *zamar* in any way denotes the playing of musical instruments!

TAMMUZ - 27

David prayed, “Teach my hands to war and my fingers to fight.”¹⁶ Even though he was a mighty warrior, having slain tens of thousands of G-d's earthly enemies, I believe David was speaking here of warring on the musical instruments G-d inspired him to make. David had great insight into Yahweh’s heart and kingdom. He knew the battle was fought and won in the Spirit before it was played out in the natural.

¹⁵ Psalm 34:1-2

¹⁶ Psalm 144:1

TAMMUZ - 28

The Hebrew letters which spell *zamar* teach us an amazing lesson. The letter *Zayin* (“Z”) was originally drawn as the picture of a weapon. “*Mar*” is the Hebrew word meaning “bitter.” Thus *zamar* is a weapon to cut off bitterness.

TAMMUZ - 29

Hallel and *Shabach* lead us to the house of G-d.

Todah ministers to the LORD at the gates of the temple.

Tehillim and *Zamar* are psalms to the LORD in the courts of the house of G-d.

Yadah and *Barak* position us for worship in the Holy of Holies.

TAMMUZ- 30

Psalm 100 - A Psalm of Thanksgiving - *Mizmor leTodah*

[*Hallel*] and [*shabach*]¹⁷ the LORD, all you lands!

Serve the LORD with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

Know that the LORD, He is G-d;

It is He who made us,

And not we ourselves;

We are His people

And the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with *todah*.

And into His courts with *tehillah*.

Yadah Him

And *barak* His name.

For the LORD is good;

His mercy is everlasting,

And His truth endures to all generations.

(Sung to the accompaniment of *zamar*).

¹⁷ The author placed *hallel* and *shabach* here by their definitions. The actual Hebrew word that begins Psalm 100 is *hariuh*.