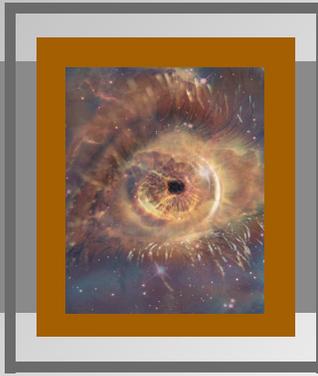


VISIO



DIVINA

The Wisdom of Contemplative Vision

THE PATH TO LIFE

Psalm 1A

The root metaphor of all biblical literature is the journey. Humankind is on a journey through space and time, and each individual life is filled with many journey stories, and our whole lifetime is a long journey. This metaphor is illustrated over and over again throughout the Bible and in the all the Abrahamic faiths. The geographical context is, of course, the Middle East—a semi arid region of the world in which these epic stories take place.

Psalm 1 vividly portrays this metaphor. We are each experiencing the journey into a particular form of life, and as this Psalm so starkly put it, onto one of two paths that life takes us. Either we move towards fullness of life, or we move towards destruction. This is the either/or choice which this Psalm sees as being real in every human experience.

You may have noticed that religion in general often speaks about choices in exactly this way. Conventionally religion is understood dualistically—a choice must be made between two extremes, life or death, heaven or hell. The Psalm sees the destiny of humanity and of every individual this way.

Ours is a long journey, filled with choices. There are decisions to make, and consequences to be experienced. That is why we are in time. We are here precisely to experience both—the light and the darkness. The images portray scenes of an oasis in the desert in contrast to a stark, blighted land where there is no shade and no water. These precise geological features are used as metaphors for an inner landscape of spirit that we also experience in some way.

Karma (the law of cause and effect—“what you sew you must reap”) is an inevitability that is recognized by all sacred traditions in some form. Human actions have consequences, and it is precisely here in space and time where we most vividly experience those consequences. These become a learning experience. Without them we would learn nothing.

The flip side of karmic law is that we actually possess freedom to choose. We are not bound to a fate with no choices. We are not automatons. We have actual freedom (though it may be limited). Our freedom is real, but it has, as we come to find out, consequences. The choices we make result in the next steps we take on the path and how the path unfolds. Every step in some way presents a new freedom and can change the future and its outcomes.

Reflections on Image and Text:

1. *How accurately does this psalm describe your experience—or at least a part of your human experience?*
2. *Would you agree that life's choices are often stark—an either/or choice must often be made?*
3. *Do you believe in “karmic law?” How have you experienced the law of cause and effect?*
4. *Is karmic law the same thing as “...your Eternal Law” mentioned in this Psalm?*
5. *When have you experienced life as an oasis--a fertile, well watered ground of lived experience?*
6. *Do the images used for this experience express what you know and have experienced?*
7. *What would be your advise to someone just starting this path toward life? What wisdom would you share out of your own experience?*

LECTIO DIVINA

The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text

PSALM 1

Life's Journey

1. *Blessed, O blessed, I say are those who walk upon a path
whose steps are firmly planted on your eternal law,
For in that word they find their joy, their meditation day and night,
and do not wander far to take the counsels of the worldly wise.*
2. *These "wise-of-word" speak guile,
their scorn of you is made from prideful
seats above the masses far below.*
3. *But the blessed ones grow strong as living trees,
their roots sink deep and hidden
Beside the flowing streams which come from you.
And through life's passing seasons
They do not cease to bear a plenitude of fruit,
nor do they fade from giving shade of leaf that covers all with good.*
4. *While on the other path there is no shade or water near,
and all life withers quickly in the winds
that blow across the grass.*
5. *So when the sad results of wickedness give witness to their lives
they fall away and have no place
in your eternal circle of the wise.*
6. *You guard and guide the path that leads to life
and those who walk in right-relationship to all.
But those who choose the other path?
Their steps lead surely into doom.*

—translated by
Lynn C. Bauman
Ancient Songs Sung Anew

—This reflection, text and its
illumination
have been provided
by Alison Hine
(creator of the illuminations)
and Lynn Bauman
as a means of
contemplative
prayer
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Contemplating
THE ILLUMINATION

