

GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Based Community Organizing and Development

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FAMILY SIDDUR STUDY: LESSON PLAN 4

THIS TIME WE'RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT TWO MORE OF THE PSALMS THAT ARE IN THE שַׁבָּת קַבְּלַת שַׁבָּת SERVICE.

- Remember, that's the first service on Friday night—the one that helps us get ready for שַׁבָּת, so we're the best we can be.
- The two psalms are Psalm 98 on page 18 and Psalm 99 on page 19.

LET'S READ PSALM 98 IN ENGLISH TOGETHER—BUT KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU MAY NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND MUCH OF IT YET.

- Would someone read for us the first line of the Psalm 98 in Hebrew [שִׁירוֹ לַיהוָה שִׁיר [שִׁירוֹ לַיהוָה שִׁיר] on page 18.
- It says that we should sing a new song to Adonai because God has worked wonders.
- **Who is “Adonai,” again—this lord?**
- Not the “Lord *over us*” but instead the One God who creates a *supportive foundation* under us by giving us the Torah, which shows us how to live good lives.
- We have already said that God is the Creator of all the Creation.
- **After God created everything, did God go on vacation—or does God still have control of the laws that determine how everything works?**
 1. **For instance, when stars disappear into black holes, is that because the stars have decided to disappear, or is their disappearance willed by God, their creator?**
 2. **When people recover from deadly illnesses after their doctors have said that recovery is impossible, what is it that brings about their recovery; and if we say it's simply the special ability of their body, what was the source of that ability?**
- **What do think it means that God works “wonders”?**
- The Psalm says that God has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel, the Jewish people.
- Part of what the Psalm is saying is that God has done something miraculous, caring for the Jewish people and keeping us alive for thousands of years, unlike any other people.
- **If you look at the rest of the Psalm, do you see two similar words that have the same root letters, ג-נ-נ [גַּנְנָה] and ג-נ-נ [גַּנְנָה], which mean to express joyous emotion?**
- The Psalm is saying that there is more joy in the world because God loves and keeps the Jewish people alive.
 1. **Why should there be more joy in the world because the Jewish people are here?**
 2. **Because God gave us the Torah so we could do what God wants of us and show other people that when they do what God wants, they too will have a good life.**

3. ***Can you think of any way that the Jewish people and our Torah have been a “light to the other nations”?*** [PROVIDED THE BASIS FOR CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM]
- Part of what we can learn from this Psalm is that when we pray, we should not think of what we want from God, but think instead of what God wants from us.

NOW LET’S LOOK AT PSALM 99.

- ***Can someone read the first two lines of Psalm 99 in Hebrew*** [עֲמִים יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ יִרְגָזוּ] *ישׁב כְּרוֹבִים תְּנוּט הָאָרֶץ on page 19?*
- In English it reads: “Adonai is *sovereign*; nations tremble. God is enthroned on high; the very earth quivers.”
- ***What does “sovereign” mean?*** [POWER OVER EVERYBODY AND EVERYTHING]
- ***So what might we learn from those first two lines?***
 1. They remind us again that God makes the rules or laws that govern the whole world and everything in it.
 2. There are two kinds of Godly laws: those that govern the physical world, such as the laws of physics, geology, and biology; and those that govern the world of the spirit, such as the laws regarding righteousness, truth, justice, freedom, peace, and kindness.
- ***What happens when we ignore the spiritual laws—like tell lies or be unkind to others?***
 1. ***Who do our lies affect?***
 2. ***What happens when the truth comes out?***
- This Psalm is reminding us that we have to learn the rules—we have to study the Torah to find out what God wants us to do and not to do.
- ***What does the seventh line of the English translation of Psalm 99 say about God’s rules?***
 1. God wants us to be just and compassionate.
 2. Which is another way of saying that God wants people to be fair and kind to one another.

DO YOU EVER FEEL THAT IT’S HARD TO BE KIND OR FAIR TO SOME PEOPLE?

- Now we don’t want you to mention any names!—because we don’t gossip about other people.
- ***But can you describe when it’s hard for you to be fair and kind to other people?***
- ***What about the times when other people are unfair and unkind to you?***
- So the time when it’s hardest to be fair and kind is when other people are treating us badly.
- ***At those times, do we want to act like them—do we want to be unfair and unkind just because that’s the way they’re acting and we want to even the score?***
- ***So what can you do if someone is acting that way toward you—what choices do you have?***