

## Introduction

Tefilla Le-Ani: A famous plea for God to listen to our pain and distress. We remain hopeful that we will be present for the salvation of all who are suffering.

**A prayer of one** who is lowly and faint, pouring forth a plea before God. Lord, hear my prayer; let my cry come before You. Do not hide Your face from me in my time of trouble; turn Your ear to me; when I cry, answer me speedily. For my days have vanished like smoke and my bones are charred like a hearth. My body is stricken and withered like grass; too wasted to eat my food; on account of my vehement groaning my bones show through my skin. I am like a great owl in the wilderness, an owl among the ruins. I lie awake; I am like a lone bird upon a roof. All day long my enemies revile me; my deriders use my name to curse. For I have eaten ashes like bread and mixed my drink with tears, because of Your wrath and Your fury; for You have cast me far away. My days are like a lengthening shadow; I wither like grass. But You, Lord, are enthroned forever; Your fame endures throughout the ages. You will surely arise and take pity on Zion, for it is time to be gracious to her; the appointed time has come. Your servants take delight in its stones, and cherish its dust. The nations will fear the name of God, all the kings of the earth, Your glory. For God has built Zion, appearing in divine glory—turning to the prayer of the destitute and not spurning their prayer. May this be written down for a coming generation, that people yet to be created may praise Yah. Looking down from the holy heights, God beholds the earth from heaven to hear the groans of the prisoner, to release those condemned to death; that God's fame may be recounted in Zion, with praises offered in Jerusalem, when the nations gather together, the kingdoms, to serve God. My strength was drained in mid-course, my days shortened. I say, "My God, do not take me away in the midst of my days, You whose years go on for generations on end. Of old You established the earth; the heavens are the work of Your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure; they shall all wear out like a garment; You change them like clothing and they pass away. But You are the same, and Your years never end. May the children of Your servants dwell securely and their offspring endure in Your presence.

תַּפִּלָּה לְעַנִּי כִּי־עָטַף וְלִפְנֵי י-הוה יִשְׁפָּד שִׁיחוֹ:  
י-הוה שְׁמַעָה תַּפְּלָתִי וְשׁוּעָתִי אֵלַי תְּבוֹא:  
אַל־תִּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי בְּיוֹם צָרָלִי הִטְהַרְאֵלִי  
אֲזַנְךָ בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָא מִהֵר עֲנֵנִי: כִּי־כָלוּ בְעָשָׁן  
יָמַי וְעַצְמוֹתַי כְּמוֹקֵד נְחָרוֹ: הוֹפֵחַ־כְּעָשָׂב וַיִּבֶשׁ  
לִבִּי כִּי־שָׁכַחְתִּי מֵאֲכֹל לֶחֶמִי: מִקּוֹל אַנְחָתִי  
דָּבָקָה עֲצָמִי לְבָשָׂרִי: דָּמִיתִי לְקֶאֱת מִדְּבַר  
הַיִּתִּי כְּכֹס חֲרָבוֹת: שָׁקַדְתִּי וְאֶהְיֶה כְּצִפּוֹר  
בוֹדֵד עַל־גֶּגֶז: כָּל־הַיּוֹם חָרַפּוּנִי אוֹיְבֵי מְהוֹלְלִי  
בִּי נִשְׁבְּעוּ: כִּי־אֶפְר פְּלֶחֶם אֶכְלֵתִי וְשִׁקְוִי  
בִּבְכִי מִסִּכְתִּי: מִפְּגִיזֵעֶמֶד וְקִצְפָּף כִּי נִשְׁאַתְנִי  
וַתִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי: יָמִי כְּצֶל נְטוּי וְאֲנִי כְּעָשָׂב אֵיבֶשׁ:  
וְאַתָּה י-הוה לְעוֹלָם תִּשָּׁב וְזָכַרְךָ לְדֹר וָדֹר:  
אַתָּה תִּקּוֹם תִּרְחַם צִיּוֹן כִּי־עַת לְחַנּוּנָהּ כִּי־בָא  
מוֹעֵד: כִּי־רָצוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ אֶת־אַבְנֶיהָ וְאֶת־עַפְרָהּ  
יַחֲנֹנוּ: וַיִּירָאוּ גוֹיִם אֶת־שֵׁם י-הוה וְכָל־מַלְכֵי  
הָאָרֶץ אֶת־כְּבוֹדֶךָ: כִּי־בָנָה י-הוה צִיּוֹן נִרְאָה  
בְּכְבוֹדוֹ: פָּנָה אֶל־תַּפְּלַת הָעֲרֵר וְלֹא־בָזָה  
אֶת־תַּפְּלָתָם: תִּפְתָּב זֹאת לְדֹר אַחֲרוֹן וְעַם  
נִבְרָא יִהְלָלֶנָּה: כִּי־הִשְׁקִיף מִמְרוֹם קִדְשׁוֹ  
י-הוה מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־אָרֶץ הַבַּיִט: לְשִׁמְעַ אֲנִקֶּת  
אֲסִיר לְפָתַח בְּנֵי תְמוֹתָהּ: לְסַפֵּר בְּצִיּוֹן שֵׁם  
י-הוה וַתִּהְלָתוּ בִירוּשָׁלַם: בְּהַקְבֵּץ עַמִּים  
יַחְדוֹ וּמִמְלָכוֹת לְעַבֵּד אֶת־י-הוה: עֲנֵה בְּדָרְךָ  
(כחו) [פְּחִי] קֶצֶר יָמִי: אִמַר אֵלִי אֶל־תִּעַלְנִי  
בְּחַצֵּי יָמִי בְּדֹר דֹּרוֹרִים שְׁנוֹתֶיךָ: לְפָנִים  
הָאָרֶץ יִסְדָּתָהּ וּמַעֲשֶׂה יְדֶיךָ שָׁמַיִם: הִמָּה  
יֵאבְדוּ וְאַתָּה תַעֲמֹד וְכֹלָם כְּפָגֵד יִבְלוּ כְּלָבוֹשׁ  
תִּחְלִיפֵם וַיִּחְלְפוּ: וְאַתָּה־הוּא וְשְׁנוֹתֶיךָ לֹא  
יִתְמוּ: בְּנִי־עַבְדֶּיךָ יִשְׁכּוֹנוּ וְזָרְעִם לְפָנֶיךָ כֹּחוֹ:  
(תהלים קב)

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While going through an extended period of illness, we may feel exiled from the life we led before. A sick person, or their loved one, may feel “lowly and faint” (לְעַנְי כִּי־יַעֲטֹף). We call out to God, “Do not hide Your face from me in my time of trouble” (אַל־תִּסְתֵּר פְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי בְיוֹם צָר־לִי). We plead for Him to listen closely to how difficult life has become. “Turn Your ear to me; when I cry, answer me speedily” (הִטֵּה־אֲלֵי אָזְנְךָ בְיוֹם) (אֶקְרָא מִהָר עֲנֵנִי). We feel as though we are losing our purpose, “For my days have vanished like smoke and my bones are charred like a hearth” (כִּי־כָלוּ בְעֵשֶׁן יָמַי וְעֲצָמוֹתַי כְּמוֹקֵד נִחְרוּ). We may also feel alone in the desolation of the world around us, “I am like a great owl in the wilderness, an owl among the ruins” (דָּמִיתִי לַקָּאֵת מִדְּבַר הַיַּיִתִּי כְּכֹס חֲרָבוֹת).

Despite all of the suffering, our belief and trust in God remains. After recounting to God our dire situation, we begin to speak about God, His eternal presence, and His ability to bring salvation to everyone. “You will surely arise and take pity on Zion, for it is time to be gracious to her; the appointed time has come” (אֲתָהּ תִקּוּם תְּרַחֵם צִיּוֹן כִּי־עֵת לְחַנּוּנָהּ כִּי־בָא מוֹעֵד). We hope not just for our own salvation, but for all those who feel downtrodden to have their prayers heard. God will “Turn to the prayer of the destitute and not spurn their prayer” (פְּנֵה אֶל־תְּפִלַּת הָעֲרֵעַר וְלֹא־בִזֶּה אֶת־תְּפִלָּתָם). Our own situation inspires us to pray for others, and not just ourselves. No matter what the future may hold for us, we are certain that God will provide redemption.

