

Wild Psalm

By David Shapiro (In “Old New Poems”, *Body of Prayer*, p. 10)

For Michal Govrin

In another world, listening to a Yemenite dump
Dreaming of Jerusalem our popular flesh,
A sleeper a singer whose name is a triple pun
A language where skin would be light,
It all sounds like the king's first love.
But in this world we sit to translate.
God splits and the blind man's reference
Ends like the war ever not quite.
As we forget the grammar we are of red clay, an idiot.
The supplicants approach, on the field of untranslatable force.
Simone says nothing but: Poetry
More difficult than mathematics, as I warned you.
And the old poets, and the books appear themselves,
Holiness in Sin, that enraged Gershom – the doubled books
And the body's words: Blessed is He who created the creation.
Blessed are they who created the blessing.

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“The Hebrew root for “pray” [פלל / peh lamed lamed] has three meanings. One is to wait, to aspire, to foresee, to hope, or to presume. The second one is to plead, to request. The third one: to judge and to sentence. Three different landscapes of the same root. For the short time we have, I would like to stress the first meaning – of the expectation, the hope, the presumption. Do we ever think about how close prayer and prophecy are as the Hebrew common root reveals? Both of them project a future, and bring it by through the power of language, the power of performance. Both bring, or believe to bring a projected future into reality by the mere power of saying it, as a curse, as a wish, as a blessing, as an oath. Like magic. Yet the most intense expectation of the prayer is for the listener – an expectation and an outrageous confidence – of being listened to. Without the addressing there wouldn't be a prayer. Even wordless, before the first word, the prayer is already addressing. The prayer itself has the power to establish the space of the address – to create, to open it. And in a way it does not only create an “I” who has the power to address, but also the addressee.”

(Michal Govrin, In “Body of Prayer Text”, *Body of Prayer*, p. 35)

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“... So, when this break, this interruption happens in the everyday life, on the exceptional moment of prayer, we are going back to the name, to the name of name, to the Jewish God who has, in a sense, a number of names, a nameless name, or a placeless place, and so on and so forth. We don't simply address someone, we pray to

someone – God if you want, some unique one, to allow us to pray, and that’s something which is very often said in *The Name*: “my Lord open my lips.” I pray the Lord that He allow me to pray. I don’t pray the Lord for just asking this or that, but I pray for Him or Her, for the Unique One, to free my prayer, to allow me to pray. That’s why it’s a prayer and an order at the same time: be the one who allows me to pray. So, be the addressee, be the addressee of my prayer, and allow me to pray. It’s praying after the prayer – prier après la priere – which is the prayer before the prayer, the prayer for the prayer.”

(Jacques Derrida, In “Body of Prayer Commentary”, *Body of Prayer*, pp. 62-63)