

Psalm 148

1 Hallelujah.

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise Him on high.

2 Praise Him, all His angels,
praise Him, all His hosts.

3 Praise Him, sun and moon,
praise Him, all bright stars.

4 Praise Him, highest heavens,
and you waters that are above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for it was He who commanded that they be created.

6 He made them endure forever,
establishing an order that shall never change.

7 Praise the LORD, O you who are on earth,
all sea monsters and ocean depths,

8 fire and hail, snow and smoke,
storm wind that executes His command,

9 all mountains and hills,
all fruit trees and cedars,

10 all wild and tamed beasts,
creeping things and winged birds,

11 all kings and peoples of the earth,
all princes of the earth and its judges,

12 youths and maidens alike,
old and young together.

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for His name, His alone, is sublime;
His splendor covers heaven and earth.

14 He has exalted the horn of His people
for the glory of all His faithful ones,
Israel, the people close to Him.

Hallelujah.

Every morning, our liturgy encourages us to finish the Book of Psalms. Of course, we do this symbolically and not in actuality, but we include the last six psalms in sequence toward the end of our Preliminary Service. There are many reasons why this sequence works together. One of these is that Psalms 146, 147, and 148 echo the idea I talked about two weeks ago that we see as the structure of 145: Individual, Group, Everyone. After encoding that in the structure of 145, we see each idea played out in its own psalm - all in regard to praising God. Psalms 146-150 each begin and end with the word Hallelujah - Praise the LORD.

In this progression, Psalm 148 describes how everyone praises - or should praise - God. In fact, the psalm is basically a list representing the totality of those who might praise God. The first half of the psalm starts with the heavenly beings: God's angels, God's hosts, the sun, the moon, the stars, the heavens themselves, etc. The second half of the psalm includes (a longer list of) beings on earth, starting, interestingly, with sea monsters and the depths of the abyss. We then hit fire, hail, snow, wind, trees, birds, all the way up to kings and officials, young and old alike.

There are two messages here that seem appropriate. The first is one that I keep coming back to: we all have something to praise God for. Note that praise is not just gratitude: we are not just happy because of what was given, but because of who gave it. Even when we are feeling low, we can find something or someone that is praiseworthy.

The second message, also appropriate in our present moment, is that everyone is *necessary* for praising God. This list of entities in the world is certainly not exhaustive, but it does run the gamut and poetically stands for everyone. Every piece of the heavenly host - the sun, moon, stars, etc. - helps to make the world work. Similarly, every part of the world is necessary. And the praise is one way of orienting our goals in the same direction. A refrain we have heard often in the last three-plus months: We are all in this together. Not a new idea, but sometimes we need reminding.

Shavua Tov.