

### God's Voice

What would it mean for us to hear God's voice?

The Bible offers two different scenes of revelation. The people Israel hear God's voice on Sinai amidst thunder and lightning (Exodus 19). Yet, pointedly, Elijah, the only prophet (other than Moses) who also experiences a revelation at Sinai, comes to understand that God is not in the thunder and lightning, but in the "still small voice"—or, as in the current Jewish Publication Society translation, "a soft murmuring sound," or perhaps as an alternate translation would have it, in "the thin sound of silence" (1 Kings 19:12)—the profusion of translations indicating in themselves the plurality of ways we each may hear what impels us from within, or without.

The voice we hear may come to us as a surprise—in moments of distress, at times when we are still and alone, when we are on a journey. Or we may hear the voice when we have engaged in extensive preparations, meditating, thinking, praying, or fasting. We may hardly hear it, yet it can be shattering, thunderous—sending us on our way, impelling us, allowing us to see clearly what we had not seen before at all.

### Returning the Torah

*We rise as the ark is opened.*

**Leader:**

Celebrate the name of ADONAI; God's name alone is exalted.

**Congregation:**

God's glory encompasses heaven and earth; God extols the faithful—raising up Israel, the people God keeps close. Halleluyah!

*Hodo al eretz v'shamayim, va-yarem keren l'amo, t'hilah l'khol hasidav, livnei yisrael am k'rovo. Ha'l'luyah!*

A PSALM OF DAVID

Acclaim ADONAI, children of the Divine; acclaim ADONAI, with honor and strength.

Acclaim ADONAI, with the honor due God's name; bow before ADONAI in the splendor of the sanctuary.

The voice of ADONAI thunders over the waters;

God, glorious, thunders—ADONAI, over the great sea.

The voice of ADONAI, with all its power; the voice of ADONAI, with all its majesty; the voice of ADONAI shatters the cedars.

ADONAI shatters the cedars of Lebanon—making the trees dance like calves, the mountains of Lebanon and Sirion like wild bulls.

The voice of ADONAI forms flames of fire; the voice of ADONAI convulses the wilderness, ADONAI convulses the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of ADONAI makes hinds calve and strips forests bare, and in God's sanctuary all acknowledge the glory of God.

ADONAI was enthroned above the flood waters: enthroned,

ADONAI is eternally sovereign.

ADONAI will grant strength to God's people; ADONAI will bless them with peace.

*Mizmor l'david.*

*Havu ladonai b'nei eilim, havu ladonai kavod va-oz.*

*Havu ladonai k'vod sh'mo, hishtahavu ladonai b'hadrat kodesh.*

*Kol Adonai al ha-mayim, El ha-kavod hirim, Adonai al mayim rabim.*

*Kol Adonai ba-ko-ah, kol Adonai be-hadar, kol Adonai shover arazim, va-y'shabeir Adonai et arzei ha-l'vanon. Va-yarkidem k'mo eigel, l'vanon v'siryon k'mo ven re'eimim. Kol Adonai hotzev lahavot esh, kol Adonai yahil midbar, yahil Adonai midbar kadesh. Kol Adonai y'holel ayalot.*

*Va-yehesof y'arot u-v'heikhalo kulo omer kavod.*

*Adonai la-mabul yashav, va-yeishev Adonai melekh l'olam.*

*Adonai oz l'amo yiten, Adonai y'varekh et amo va-shalom.*

### הַכְנִסְתָּ הַתּוֹרָה

*We rise as the ark is opened.*

**Leader:**

יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי נִשְׁגָּב שְׁמוֹ לְבָדוֹ.

**Congregation:**

הוֹדוּ עַל אֲרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם. וַיִּרַם קֶרֶן לְעַמּוֹ, תַּהֲלֶה לְכָל־חַסִּידָיו, לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם קָרְבוֹ, הַלְלוּיָהּ.

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

הָבוּ לַיהוָה בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים, הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז,

הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ, הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַיהוָה בְּהַדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ, קוֹל יְהוָה עַל הַמַּיִם,

אֵל הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים, יְהוָה עַל מַיִם רַבִּים.

קוֹל יְהוָה בַּפֶּחַ,

קוֹל יְהוָה בְּהַדָּר, קוֹל יְהוָה שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים,

וַיִּשְׁפֹּר יְהוָה אֶת־אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן.

וַיִּרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ עֵגֶל, לְבָנוֹן וְשִׁרְיוֹן כְּמוֹ בְּנֵי־רֵאמִים.

קוֹל יְהוָה חָצַב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ,

קוֹל יְהוָה יַחִיל מְדָבָר, יַחִיל יְהוָה מְדַבֵּר קֹדֶשׁ,

קוֹל יְהוָה יַחֲלֵל אֵילוֹת.

וַיַּחֲשֹׁף יַעֲרוֹת, וּבְהִיכְלוֹ כָּלוּ אֲמֵר כְּבוֹד.

יְהוָה לְמַבּוּל יֹשֵׁב, וַיִּשָּׁב יְהוָה מִלְּךָ לְעוֹלָם.

יְהוָה עַז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן, יְהוָה יְבַרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם.

תהלים כט

EXTOL יהללו. Psalm 148:13–14. The practice of reciting these verses while returning the Torah to the ark is mentioned in the earliest prayerbooks.

PSALM 29. Psalm 29 was chosen to accompany the procession of the Torah as it is returned to the ark on Shabbat morning because of the predominant image of the voice of God. The phrase *kol Adonai* ("the voice of God")—which was identified by the ancient rabbis with the revelation of God's word on Sinai—is repeated seven times in this psalm. The thunder and lightning described here evoke the scene of the revelation at Sinai in Exodus 19; the Bible identifies Kadesh with the Sinai desert.

Biblical scholars see the psalm as a depiction of a storm coming in from the Mediterranean, passing over the mountains of Lebanon—cedars top those high mountains and are among the world's sturdiest and longest-lived trees—and moving over the fertile land and then through the desert.

The psalm begins with reference to the waters of the Mediterranean Sea and ends with God enthroned

above the primal waters of creation. It also begins with an angelic chorus praising God and toward the end mentions the human chorus praising God in the Temple. Thus earth and heaven, the human and the Divine, are joined.

We began the Torah service with verses marking a royal procession and now, as the Torah is returned to the ark after it has been read to the congregation, we end with verses depicting God as enthroned as the "eternal sovereign."