



LeoBaeckTemple

Bubble Up: 2021-2022/5782

Heart and Soul:

A playful exploration pairing the insight of the podcast **Dolly Parton’s America** with selections from *Songs Ascending: The Book of Psalms in a New Translation* by Rabbi Richard N. Levy, z”l

“Music is the way we accompany ourselves through space and time”

- Jad Abumrad, Co-Producer Dolly Parton’s America Podcast

Heart & Soul created by: Elizabeth Levy & Rabbi Benjamin Ross

Blessing Before Studying Torah

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ-הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסֵּק בְּדִבְרֵי-תוֹרָה

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha’olam
asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav v’tzivanu la’asok b’divre torah.*

Blessed are You, the Eternal our God, Sovereign of the Universe,
who sanctifies us with *mitzvot* and invites us to engage with words of *Torah*.

B'rit/Working Agreement for LBT Small Groups

ACCOUNTABILITY:

I will show up to our agreed upon times: I will let the group leader know the (good) reason I will be absent. I will also be punctual and respect everyone's time.

PRESENCE:

When we're together, I will be present and mindful. I will listen and share. Life (and our mobile devices) offers many distractions, but I will stay present and engaged.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

I will maintain complete confidentiality. What I hear and say stays here.

VULNERABILITY:

I will stretch myself to be as open and honest as possible with my perspectives and experiences in order to create a safe environment that might encourage others to take risks as well.

RESPECT:

I will remember that all of us are here for a common purpose and I will respect and acknowledge everyone in my group.

NO FIXING, ADVISING, SAVING OR SETTING STRAIGHT:

I will give each person the gift of true attention without trying to "solve their problem." No advice unless it's asked.

LISTENING:

I understand that some of us are talkers, while some of us are quieter. I will be aware not to dominate discussions and to balance how much I'm talking with how much I'm listening.

CURIOSITY:

Judaism is a religion of exploration; of big questions more than answers. I will get the most out of my group by being open to our discussions and the people around me.

OWNERSHIP:

This is our LBT Small Group. This is our community to create. While we have guidelines and suggestions, it is ours to shape and form. We will get out of it what we put into it.

**Language graciously borrowed from The Temple in Atlanta, Georgia*

LEO BAECK TEMPLE'S HEART AND SOUL: A BUBBLE UP PRODUCTION

A playful exploration pairing the insights from the "Dolly Parton's America" podcast with selections and commentary from *Songs Ascending: The Book of Psalms in a New Translation* by Rabbi Richard N. Levy, z"l

SESSION III: Homeland and Exile

PARTNER PODCASTS:

[Episode 3 - Dolly Parton's America](#) (Tennessee Mountain Trance - Oct. 29, 2019)

[Episode 4 - Dolly Parton's America](#) (Neon Moss - Nov. 5, 2019)

I. READ SUMMARY & QUESTION (10 minutes): Where is home? Dolly sings about her eternal home, its literal beauty and spiritual grounding. While Dolly is a global phenomenon, she has rooted herself and her narrative in Tennessee, particularly the mountains of Tennessee. It is almost mythical; it is a land embedded with holiness, wisdom, and strength. We find in the Psalms a parallel devotion to Zion and Jerusalem, the ancient homeland of the people Israel. This yearning to be "home," to wrestle with living in exile, literally and spiritually, is a core Jewish theme in our literature and liturgy.

OPENING QUESTION: Where do you feel most truly at home?

II. READ ALOUD PSALM AND RABBI RICHARD N. LEVY'S COMMENTARY (5-10 minutes)

Psalm 126

A Song of Ascendings.

When Adonai returned the returners of Zion,

We were like dreamers;

Our mouth was filled with laughter then,

Our tongue with song.

There was talk among the nations then:

"God did great things with these people!"

God did great things with us!

We were so happy...

Return our returners, Adonai--

In torrents, turning desert streams to flood!

Then those who sow with weeping

Will reap with joy;

Those who trudge the row, sobbing as they

strain to lift their trail of seed,

Will march in with song, lifting high their

golden sheaves!

"For Jerusalem [and Zion] transcends us all, and those who guard her gates need to protect her for all who need to be nurtured by her. This psalm reminds us that Jerusalem is more than a place on a map or in the headlines; it is the place whither we once upon a time ascended with our tribes to testify to our obedience to God."

"What is our exile? It is not from the Land of Israel for we can travel there and even live there if we so choose. The extended metaphor of Israel as the burdened farmer may resonate more with us, as we work hard to fulfill our dreams of our own personal Zion, where once we lived or imagined we lived, in joy. The poet's dream is not of an individual, solitary return, but a return of the whole people, surging like a torrent through a desert turned to fertile plain."

- Rabbi Richard N. Levy, p. 497, 503

(Option to briefly share reactions to the Psalm or commentary)

III. LISTEN TO [MY TENNESSEE MOUNTAIN HOME](#) (5 minutes) (LYRICS ↓) - THEN 1 MIN. OF SILENCE

IV. GROUP QUESTIONS: (30-35 minutes)

- a) **Was there a time you felt in exile**, physically or spiritually, from that which was familiar, be it a place or identity?
- b) The Psalmist sings, **“Then those who sow with weeping, Will reap with joy.”** (Psalm 126:5) When, in your own life, have you sown with tears and then reaped with joy?
- c) If you were to **choose a song that represents America-as-a-homeland** for you, what would you select and why?
- d) Compare and contrast Psalm 126 and the chorus of “My Tennessee Mountain Home.” **How is a place, like Dolly’s ancestral home or Zion, more than a place?**

OPTIONAL CONCLUDING SONG: [Sow in Tears, Reap in Joy](#) (Psalm 126:5), by Debbie Friedman

MY TENNESSEE MOUNTAIN HOME, BY DOLLY PARTON

Sittin' on the front porch on a summer
afternoon
In a straightback chair on two legs, leans
against the wall
Watch the kids a' playin' with June bugs on
a string
And chase the glowin' fireflies when evenin'
shadows fall

[Chorus:]

**In my Tennessee mountain home
Life is as peaceful as a baby's sigh
In my Tennessee mountain home
Crickets sing in the fields nearby**

Honeysuckle vine clings to the fence along
the lane
Their fragrance makes the summer wind so
sweet
And on a distant hilltop, an eagle spreads its
wings
An' a songbird on a fence post sings a
melody [Chorus]

Walkin' home from church on a Sunday with
the one ya' love
Just laughin', talkin', making future plans
And when the folks ain't lookin', you might
steal a kiss or two
Sittin' in the porch swing, holdin' hands
[Chorus]