

The Pathway of Lament

I have always tried to be upbeat in my practice and often frame my prayer as a form of affirmation. I use affirmations to reprogram habitual negative thought patterns and build confidence. So, I am naturally drawn to Prayers of positivity that point my attention towards love, prayers that lift me up and help me step into a sense of possibility.

As I dive into the Psalms, I find that so many of them are prayers of lament, expressing deep anguish and desolation. I wondered, "How can I possibly pray these words? Won't they just sink me deeper into my own negativity?"

Then, I remembered that I was raised on the Blues. My older brother fell hard for black Memphis Blues, and that soulful music became the soundtrack of my childhood. I also remembered that the Psalms were composed to be sung, not read. We don't know the ancient melodies and how they might have infused the words with layers of subtly and poignant meaning.

When I listen to and experience the Blues, I know that it is the groove, the rhythm, and the tone that move me. In that groove I hear the echoes of sorrow, yet what emerges from the music is resilience, vitality, persistence, tenacity and strength in the face of oppression and persecution.

Our ancestors who composed the Psalms also experienced devastating persecution and loss; their response was expressed in song, poetry, dance and story. Our songs of Lament help us to identify with those who are suffering, awaken our compassion and motivate us to respond to the needs of the oppressed.

The Path of Lament can guide me through the depth of my own suffering and send me to catharsis. Singing through the sadness will allow me to release the

pain that I carry and find meaning in the struggle. The song will transform my wrestling into a dance.