

Echoes of Perseverance: The Journey of Oscar Singer Through Psalm 130

Oscar's Story:

Oscar Singer was born in 1925 in Radomyśl Wielki, a small town in Poland near Tarnów. He grew up in an Hasidic family with 3 brothers and 1 sister, and his family served as the kosher butchers in the town. In September of 1939, when Oscar was only 14 years old, the Nazis invaded his village and he was sent to Plaschow for a year and a half to work in a forest and then he was sent to Mielić in 1942, where he worked on airplanes alongside his brother. Over the next 3 years, Oscar was sent to Wieliczka, Auschwitz, and Theresienstadt, and was the only member of his family to survive. After being rescued by the Russians and sent to the Landsberg Displaced Persons Camp, he spent time in Israel, Cyprus, Italy, and Germany before obtaining a visa to come to America. After settling in Denver Colorado, he married and raised two children, of whom he is extremely proud.

Psalm 130/Shir Hamaalot:

א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת: 1 A Song of Ascents. {N}
מִמַּעַמְקִים קָרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה. Out of the depths have I called
Thee, O LORD.

The beginning words highlight the position of both physical and emotional pain and suffering from which the prayer arises. As Oscar was forced to smuggle food from work, have his family members die before him, and take gold from the bodies of killed Jews, he used his faith to call for help from g-d.

ב אֲדֹנָי, שְׁמָעָה בְּקוֹלִי: 2 Lord, hearken unto my voice; {N}
תְּהַיִּינָה אָזְנוֹךָ, קְשׁוּבוֹת-- let Thine ears be attentive to the
לְקוֹל, תַּחֲנוּנָי. voice of my supplications.

The words of this line ask G-d to listen to the cries of the individual speaking. Although g-d may appear to be silent, Oscar hung on to the power of prayer in hope that g-d would relieve him of his suffering.

ג אִם-עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמַר-יְהוָה-- 3 If Thou, LORD, shouldst mark
אֲדֹנָי, מִי יַעֲמֵד. iniquities, O Lord, who could
stand?

ד כִּי-עֲמִיךָ הַסְּלִיחָה-- 4 For with Thee there is
לְמַעַן, תִּירָא. forgiveness, that Thou mayest be
feared.

The acknowledgement of g-d's ability to forgive serves as a reminder that perseverance is possible and worth believing in, even in the presence of fear and uncertainty.

ה קוֹיְתִי יְהוָה, קוֹתָה נַפְשִׁי; 5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth
וְלִדְבָרוֹ הוֹחֵלְתִי. wait, and in His word do I hope.

"in His word do I hope": Singer was able to defy the Nazis who wanted him dead as he kept hope and determination.

ו נַפְשִׁי לְאֲדָנָי-- מִשְׁמָרִים 6 My soul waiteth for the Lord,
לְבַקֵּר, שְׁמָרִים לְבַקֵּר. more than watchmen for the
watchmen for the morning; yea, more than
watchmen for the morning.

The comparison to watchmen emphasizes the Oscar's unwavering hope that G-d would bring peace and an end to his suffering.

ז יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶל-יְהוָה: 7 O Israel, hope in the LORD; for
כִּי-עִם-יְהוָה הַחֶסֶד; וְהַרְבֵּה with the LORD there is mercy, and
עִמּוֹ פְדוּת. with Him is plenteous redemption.

ח וְהוּא, יַפְדֶּה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל-- 8 And He will redeem Israel from
מִכָּל, עֲוֹנוֹתָיו. all his iniquities. {P}

The ending line calls for the collective redemption and restoration of peace for the Jewish people. Ultimately, G-d will ensure healing for all the Jews.

Conclusion:

In recounting Oscar Singer's story through the lens of Psalm 130, this project serves as a reminder of the enduring legacy of Holocaust survivors. Their resilience, courage, and unwavering faith continue to inspire and uplift, offering hope and healing in a world scarred by tragedy. Through their stories, we are reminded of the power of perseverance to overcome even the darkest of times.