

Russell Steinberg

# PSALMS OF LIGHT AND WATER

Op. 86

1. He Has Given Us Light  
(Va Ya'ér Lanú)  
adapted from Psalm 118

2. Save Me O God  
adapted from Psalm 69

Duration: 9 minutes

Blown To Bits Publications

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adapted from Psalm 118

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adapted from Psalm 69

Music by Russell Steinberg

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PREVIEW SCORE

## Notes

I composed these two psalm settings at different times: *He Has Given Us Light* during the 2020 pandemic while nationwide protests were happening over the police murder of George Floyd, and *Save Me, O God* as music director for the Stephen Wise Schools around 2003. *He Has Given Us Light* is set in Hebrew. *Save Me, O God* is set in English.

*He Has Given Us Light* is adapted from Psalm 118 and commissioned from the Judaic Sacred Music Foundation. My thanks to Steve Rothstein for advising me with textual sources and to Hila Plitmann, first for providing an excellent phonetic translation of the Hebrew, and second, for her beautiful premiere performance.

"Light" is the emphasis of this song, but the light journeys through a festive dance pulse, a hushed contrapuntal weaving, and an unexpected arrival in the distance of millenia to an anthem of black civil rights, ultimately settling in joyful radiance. This song was written at the time of the national George Floyd protests.

Both voice and piano require special attention to changing timbre in the different sections. The piano part requires a sense of pulse and delicate resonance with the clusters, but also care not to obscure the singer.

*Save Me, O God* is an expressive piece adapted from Psalm 69. Shaping dynamics and color are important especially in the vocal melismas and piano pedaling. Tempo may have some freedom to create the best sense of ebb and flow.

## Va Ya-'ér Lanú

He Has Given Us Light

adapted from Psalm 118  
(text in phoenetic Hebrew with English translation)

**Va ya'ér lánu. El, Adonái.  
Va ya'ér lánu.**

He has given us light. The Almighty is God.  
He has given us light.

**E'ven ma'asú habonim  
hay tál' rosh Piná.  
Meét Adonái, Haytázot;  
Hi Níflát beEynéynu.**

The stone despised by the builders  
has become the cornerstone.  
This emanated from the Almighty.  
It is wondrous in our eyes.

**Isrú chag baAvotim—  
Ad karnót, haMizbé'ach.**

Bind the festival boughs to the altar.

**Va ya'ér lánu. El, Adonái.  
Va ya'ér lánu.**

He has given us light. The Almighty is God.  
He has given us light.

## Save Me, O God

adapted from Psalm 69

Save me, O God,  
For the waters are come in unto my soul;  
I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing;  
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.  
I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried:  
Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

# Va Ya-'ér Lanú

(He Has Given Us Light)  
adapted from Psalm 118

Russell Steinberg

Rhythmic, joyful ♩=108

The first system of the musical score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the notes 'la' and 'nú'. The piano accompaniment consists of a right-hand melody and a left-hand bass line. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *f* (forte). The piano part includes accents and slurs.

The second system of the musical score continues in 3/4 time with the same key signature. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the note 'la'. The piano accompaniment continues with a right-hand melody and a left-hand bass line. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The piano part includes accents, slurs, and a triplet in the bass line.

9

*f* *p* *gently* *p*

nú Va ya-ér

*f* *pp* *gently* *p*

13

la - nú Va ya -'ér

*mf* *pp* *mp*

17

lá - nu. El A - do -

*p* *mp* *mf* *p* *mp*

20

musical score for measures 20-22. The vocal line is in G major with a key signature of one flat (F major) and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "nai A - do - nai A - do - nai". The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. A large red watermark "PREMIUM SCORE" is overlaid on the score.

23

musical score for measures 23-25. The vocal line starts with a *mf* dynamic and changes to *f* in measure 25. The lyrics are: "Va ya - ér lá - nu. lá nu lá nu." The piano accompaniment follows the vocal dynamics, with *mf* and *f* markings. A large red watermark "PREMIUM SCORE" is overlaid on the score.

26

musical score for measures 26-28. The vocal line starts with a *p* dynamic and changes to *f* in measure 27, then back to *p* in measure 28. The lyrics are: "El A - do - nái El A - do -". The piano accompaniment follows the vocal dynamics, with *p* and *f* markings. A large red watermark "PREMIUM SCORE" is overlaid on the score.

29

*f*

*p*

nái

El A - do - nai

*f*

*sfz*

*p*

*f*

*sfz*

*rit.*

*agitato, slightly hushed* ♩=120

33

*p*

É - ven ma - 'a - sú ha - bo -

*p*

37

with full voice

*mf*

nim

hay - tá

le - rosh - pi - ná.

*mf*



41 *p* *f* *p* *ff*

le - rosh - pi - ná.

45 *jubilant*

Me - ét A - do - nai Me -

49

ét A - do - nai

slightly hushed

53

*p*

Hay - tá - zot; Hi nif - lát be - ey -

*p*

56

néy - nu.

59

iridescent

*pp* delicately

Is - ru - chag

*pp* delicately

*8va*

62

be - a - vo tim \_\_\_\_\_ Ad \_\_\_\_\_ kar-nót \_\_\_\_\_ ha - miz -

66

be - 'ach. \_\_\_\_\_ Is - ru-chag

70

be - a - vo - tim \_\_\_\_\_ Is - ru-chag \_\_\_\_\_ be - a - vo - tim \_\_\_\_\_

legato

74

*p*

Ad kar-nót ha-miz-be-ach

*p*

*mf*

77

dreamy

*pp*

Is - ru chag be - a - vo - tim

*pp*

80

*mf*

joyful, dancing

Ad kar-nót, ha - miz - be-ach.

*f*

84

*f*

Musical score for measures 84-87. The vocal line begins with a rest in measure 84, followed by the lyrics "Va ya - 'ér lá - nu, El A - do -". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and a more active treble line with chords and melodic fragments.

88

Musical score for measures 88-90. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "nai Va ya - 'ér la - nú". The piano accompaniment maintains the eighth-note bass line and provides harmonic support for the vocal melody.

91

*p*

Musical score for measures 91-94. The vocal line has the lyrics "la - nú la - nú la - nú El A - do -". The piano accompaniment features a prominent eighth-note bass line and a treble line with chords. A dynamic change to *p* (piano) is indicated at the start of measure 92, and the time signature changes to 3/4.

14<sup>93</sup> *f*  
nai

*f* *p* *f* *p*

96 *f*  
Va - ya - 'ér la - nú Va ya - 'ér

*f*

99  
la - nú Va ya - 'ér la - nú la -

*f*

102

rit. . . . .

nú

106

slower

accel. . . . .

*freely, quasi jazz*

8va

109

**allegretto lontano, floating**  
♩=100 "We shall overcome"

*ppp*

We

*sub.  
mp*

*p*

*mf*

*p*

114 *pp* *calm but insistent*

shall o - ver come

*pp*

*una corda*

118

We shall o - ver

122

come We shall o - ver come some day.



126

delicately

**poco accel.**

132

*pp* *p* *pp*

El A - do - nai

138

**♩=108** *lightly still* **gradually develop more pulse**

*p*

Va ya - 'ér la nú

*sub. p* *lightly still*

143 ♩=112

El A - do - nai El A - do - nai

147 ♩=120

*now more pulse*

Va ya - 'ér la - nú El A - do - nai

*now more pulse*

*tre corde*

151

*mf radiant*

la - nú la - nú la nú la nú

*mf radiant*

155

*mp*

*p*

*p*

la - nú la -

159

*pp*

- - - nú la -

push a little- - - - -

163

*mf*

*mf*

nú la - nú la - nú la -

167

ease a little

Musical score for measures 167-169. The vocal line (treble clef) features the lyrics "nú la - nú la nú" with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) includes a *mp* dynamic marking in the first measure and a *p* dynamic marking in the third measure.

170

*ppp*

Musical score for measures 170-171. The vocal line (treble clef) has a *ppp* dynamic marking. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) also has a *ppp* dynamic marking. A 4/4 time signature change is indicated at the start of measure 170.

PREVIEW SCORE

In memory of Avi Gesundheit

# Save Me, O God

adapted from Psalm 69

Moderato, breathing with glowing resonance

Russell Steinberg

♩ = 80



Piano introduction in G major, 3/4 time. The score consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The piano part begins with a *p* dynamic and features a *mf* dynamic in the final measure. A *Red.* (ritardando) marking is placed below the piano part.



Musical score for the first vocal line, starting at measure 178. The vocal line is in G major, 3/4 time, with lyrics: "Save\_ me O God; for the wa-ters are come in un - to my". The piano accompaniment is in G major, 3/4 time, with a *p* dynamic. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.



Musical score for the second vocal line, starting at measure 182. The vocal line is in G major, 3/4 time, with lyrics: "soul. Save\_ me". The piano accompaniment is in G major, 3/4 time, with a *p* dynamic. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

186 *mf* *p*

O God;



190 **rich and dark** *mf*

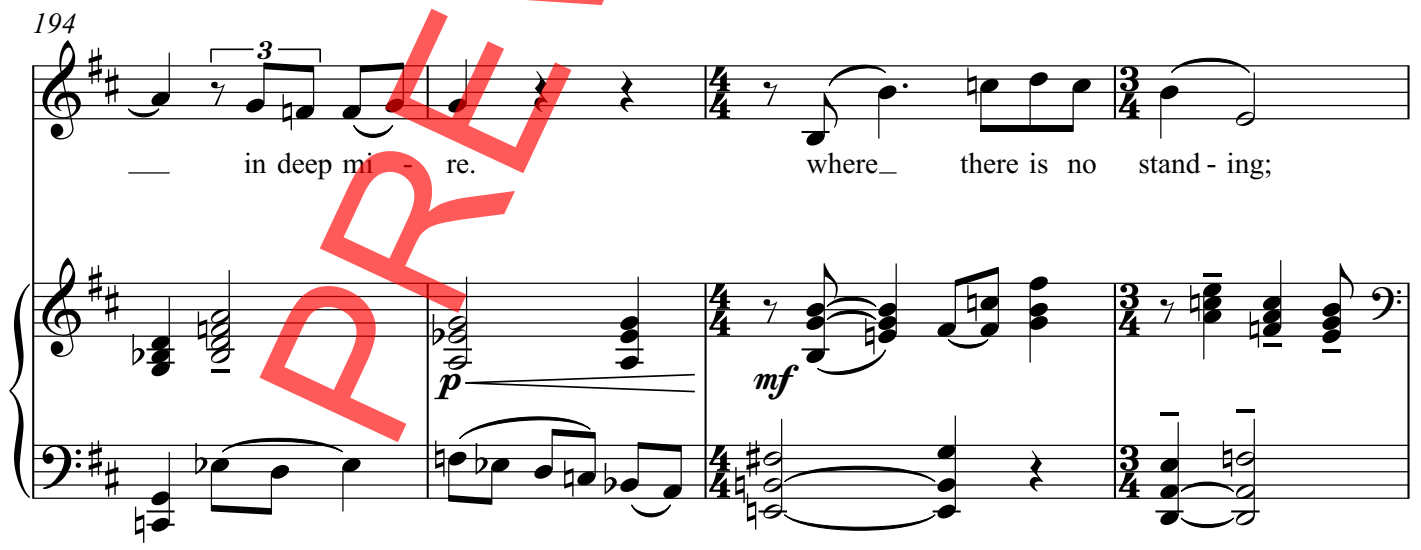
I sink



194

in deep mi - re. where\_ there is no stand - ing;

*p* *mf*



198

Musical score for measures 198-201. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is present, along with the instruction *teneramente* (tenderly). A *Ped.* (pedal) marking is also visible.

202

Musical score for measures 202-204. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands. A dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) is present.

205

Musical score for measures 205-208. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line contains the lyrics "I am come in- to". The piano part features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present. A *Ped.* (pedal) marking is also visible.

209

deep wa - ters, where the

212

floods O - ver

**Meno mosso**

214

flow\_ me. where the floods o - ver - flow me.

*mp*

*mp*

Ped.  $\wedge$



218

*p* I am wear-y *mp* of my

*sonoro*  
*pp* *mf* *p*

222

*mf*  
cry - ing, Of my cry - - - ing,

*mf*

*accel.*

225

*pp* my throat is dried:  
*pp* *p* *mf*

*rit.* *A tempo*

Ped.

228 *mf*

mine eyes fail while I

232 *f*

wait for my God. O Save me O

236

God; for the wa-ters are come

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 228-231) is marked *mf* and includes a *Ped.* (pedal) marking. The second system (measures 232-235) is marked *f*. The third system (measures 236-239) is also marked *f*. The lyrics are: 'mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. O Save me O God; for the wa-ters are come'. A large red watermark 'PREVIEW SCORE' is overlaid diagonally across the page.

239

in un - to my soul.

*mp*

243

soul.

*p* *f* *p*

*f* *p* *pp*

246

soul. soul.

*mf* *f* *p* *mf* *p*

*p* *p* *mf*

250

Save me Save me

*mf* *p*

*mf* *p*

Ped.

253

O God Save

*mf* *p*

*mf* *pp*

Ped. \*

256

me

*mp* *ppp*

*ppp*

rit. . . . .