

Alexander Massey

Kol B'ramah, Kol D'mei

Jer/ 31:15, Gen. 4:10, Sanhedrin 4:5

(voice & piano)

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Kol B'ramah, Kol D'mei

Jer. 31:15; Gen. 4:10; Jerusalem Talmud, Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

On *Yom HaShoah v'HaGevurah*, we commemorate both the victims of the Holocaust, and those who heroically resisted. This piece was written to honour those people. The three Jewish texts offer a space to reflect on the preciousness of human life, and our personal and collective responsibility to protect it. The piece begins with the voice of a mother weeping for her dead children. In the second text, the voice of God asks, 'What have you done?'; and the voice of each one of those who have died cries out to all of us. The Talmudic Rabbis noted that in Gen. 4:10 the Hebrew uses the plural - 'bloods'. The Rabbis warned that killing one person kills off the possibility of countless descendants, a 'whole world'.

1. A voice is heard in Ramah, lamenting
and weeping bitterly!
Rachel is weeping for her children,
refusing to be comforted for her
children,
for they are no more.
2. What have you done?
The voice of the bloods of your
brother
cry to me
from the ground.
3. Whoever destroys a single life,
it is considered
as if he destroyed an entire world;
4. And whoever saves a single life,
it is considered
as if he saved an entire world.

The music draws on the *nusach* of *Musaf* at *Yom Kippur*, the service that includes the honouring of Jewish martyrs. Beginning with wailing and jarring dissonance, the music gradually transforms to gentler melodic shapes and harmonies. This echoes the sequence of texts that takes us from death, loss and desolation, through awakening conscience and responsibility, to dedication to life, and therefore hope.

The first verse begins with *kol* (*quf-vav-lamed*) – a single voice crying out. The second verse begins with the same word, but this time *kol* represents a voice echoing down through the generations; in the third verse (and fourth verse), the opening word sounds the same (being a homophone) – *kol* – but this time, it is spelt *kaf-lamed*, meaning anyone, and therefore, everyone. So, the song begins with a single voice crying out, and ends with a challenge for each one of us to consider our response.



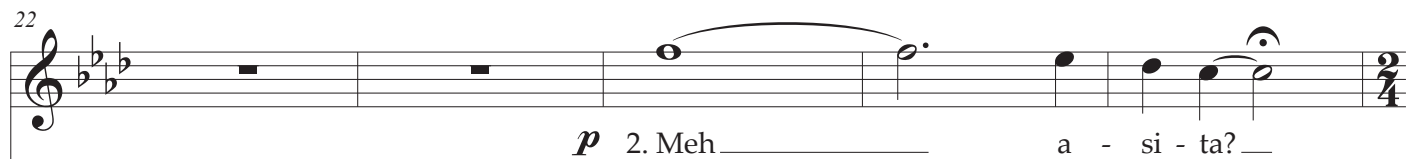
Kol B'Ramah, Kol D'mei

Music: Alexander Massey

Composed for Oxford Council of Christians and Jews
Yom HaShoah, 11 April 2018

Words: Jer 31:15; Gen. 4:10;
Jerusalem Talmud San. 4:1 (22a)

Freely, searing $\text{♩} = 63$



Alexander Massey, 2018 - Kol B'ramah, Kol D'mei © 2018

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33 *rit.* ♩=90

cha, d' - mei a - chi - cha tzo - a - chim ei - lai, tzo - a -

42 ♩=111

chim ei - lai min-ha - a - - - da - mah.

42 *rit.*

48 **Steadily** ♩=114

p

56 *mp* 3. Kol ham'-a - beid, ham'-a - beid ne-fesh a - chat,

56

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63

ma'-a - leh a - lav ha - ka -

70

tuv, k' - i - lu i - beid o - lam

77

ma - lei, k' - i - lu i - beid o -

84

Faster

lam ma - lei. 4.V' - chol

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91

— ham'-ka - yem, — ham'-ka - yem — ne-fesh a - chat, ma'-a -

98

leh a - lav ha - ka - tuy,

105

k' - i - lu ki - yem o - lam

111

ma - lei, k' - i - lu ki - yem

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117

o - lam ma - lei.

123

rit.

1. A voice is heard in Ramah, lamenting
and weeping bitterly!
Rachel is weeping for her children,
refusing to be comforted for her children,
for they are no more.

קול בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע נְהִי
בְּכִי תַמְרוּרִים
רָחֵל, מְבַכָּה עַל-בָּנֶיהָ;
מֵאֲנָה לְהִנָּחֵם עַל-בָּנֶיהָ,
כִּי אֵינָנּוּ.

2. What have you done?
The voice of the bloods of your brother
cry to me
from the ground.

מָה עָשִׂיתָ;
קול דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ,
צֶעֱקִים אֵלַי
מִן-הָאֲדָמָה.

3. Whoever destroys a single life,
it is considered
as if he destroyed an entire world;

כָּל הַמַּאֲבִיד נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת
מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכָּתוּב
כְּאֵלוֹ אֲבִיד עוֹלָם מְלֵא.

4. And whoever saves a single life,
it is considered
as if he saved an entire world.

וְכָל הַמְּקִים נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת
מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכָּתוּב
כְּאֵלוֹ קִים עוֹלָם מְלֵא.