

BROKEN  
GROUND  
OF THE  
SOUL

THE HEALING POWER OF THE PSALMS

LINDA COMPTON

outskirtspress  
DENVER, COLORADO

The opinions expressed in this manuscript are solely the opinions of the author and do not represent the opinions or thoughts of the publisher. The author has represented and warranted full ownership and/or legal right to publish all the materials in this book.

Broken Ground of the Soul  
The Healing Power of the Psalms  
All Rights Reserved.  
Copyright © 2016 Linda Compton  
v3.0

Cover Photo © 2016 thinkstockphotos.com. All rights reserved - used with permission.

This book may not be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in whole or in part by any means, including graphic, electronic, or mechanical without the express written consent of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Linda Compton  
linda@highdesertvisions.com  
505-331-4886  
HC 63 Box 30  
Pena Blanca, NM 87041

Outskirts Press, Inc.  
<http://www.outskirtspress.com>

ISBN: 978-1-4787-7468-6

Outskirts Press and the “OP” logo are trademarks belonging to Outskirts Press, Inc.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

# **Additional Praise for** *Broken Ground of the Soul*



*The book is positive in its approach; it faces squarely the issue of theodicy without being heavily philosophical. The Psalms of David were made alive to the searching soul. Anyone who has ever faced tragedy and longs for God's answer to the "problems of pain" will find this book extremely helpful.*

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel O. Akognon  
Village Baptist Church, Petaluma, California  
Adjunct Faculty, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary



*Broken Ground of the Soul reawakens the words that shaped and guided many of our young selves and...provides readers with an easy resource to turn to in the darkest times of our own personal struggles. Through her words, the wisdom of the Psalms reaches out to both affirm the fury and despair of loss and guides us to trust God's love so that we recover not necessarily in a life that we knew, but in one that is created through divine wisdom. I emerged from the read assured of God's love and presence in my life.*

Susan Sturock, M.A.  
Founding Partner, The Reading Mind



*In a world in which so much seems beyond our personal control, in which the incidence of mental illness is ever growing, and in which we seem to be more isolated and impotent, Linda Compton comes to us with a message she extracts from the Psalms. It is a message of great power and profound truth: We cannot control the course of our life, but we can control the meaning we give to it.*

*It is sheer folly to assume that we can escape loss and illness, the chaos around us. What the competent psychologist has to offer, what the religious teachings imbue in us, is the recognition that how we come to know our world, come to label it, how we come to give it meaning is the way we will then experience it. The incredible power of the Understanding we bring to adversity will change the course of the way we Experience*

*it. Whether it be Cognitive Behavioral Psychology or the Great Religious Teaching, Jungian Analysis or the Psalms, within each of us is the capacity to find peace and to create wisdom. Linda Compton has taken the brutal murder of her beloved niece and told us that "grief holds within itself the possibility of happiness." This book illuminates the way.*

Frances Salman Koenig, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist

Past President of the New Mexico Psychological Association

Chairman of the New Mexico Board of

Psychologist Examiners



*In the nearly 30 years I have worked within the criminal justice system, I have never been so impacted by a tragedy as I have this author's. What was more remarkable is her ability to hold fast to her faith and to use it to defeat the despair and devastation caused by the inhumanity of the perpetrator. Ms. Compton not only shares her loss and grief with the reader, but also her insightful interpretation of the Psalms that brought her peace, in hopes to do the same for us. Having questioned my own faith on more than one occasion during my career, her amazing perspective has not only brought me comfort in the face of everyday sorrow, but also brought me closer to the Father, a true gift indeed! I have no doubt her interpretation of the Psalms and her application to her own life and losses will provide great inspiration to victims and their families, and like myself, members of the*

*law enforcement community who struggle with the aftermath of crime every day. This book is a blessing to us all!!*

Beth Bailey  
Restitution Recovery Specialist,  
Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office



*This wonderful book addresses one of the most tragic events anyone can face...the murder of a loved one...in a thoughtful, loving and compassionate way. It offers the reader the opportunity to forgive, heal and grow. Quite amazing! The murder of my nephew absolutely devastated me and my family, not to mention his many friends. It's a long, long, long journey to even begin the healing process and one that, even thirteen years later, is not complete and may not ever be complete for me. It's a reality I've come to accept. I find Linda Compton's book insightful and powerful...much food for thought!*

David J. Rowley



*Losing a loved one under any circumstance can be devastating, but losing one to a senseless, violent crime, adds another layer of pain and trauma to the psyche. Forgiveness for the perpetrator(s) can be elusive in our anger, but remains a necessary component for true emotional healing.*

*In Broken Ground of the Soul, Compton uses her eloquent prose and insightful interpretations of the Biblical Psalms, to transform the heart-wrenching tragedy of her murdered niece into a catalyst for change and a lesson in humanity. Her message of faith and forgiveness will inspire readers to look at their own life's traumas through God's love and betrayals with new spiritual eyes. By seeking solace in a higher power, Compton assures us that love, not time, can indeed heal all things. Through God's love we can become bigger than the pain that often consumes us, and create the bountiful lives we both want and deserve.*

Gwen Olsen

International Speaker

Author of Award-winning Confessions of an Rx Drug Pusher

Founder of The Mental Health Alchemists



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



There are so many remarkable people who've been a meaningful part of this long journey, I simply can't name them all. I pray and trust they already know from our personal interactions. However, there are some individuals who have been so instrumental in various ways, my heart compels me to acknowledge them by name.

One of the most baffling aspects of my family's tragedy is the wonderful people we met. I was a reluctant visitor to a world these servant leaders choose to inhabit every day. I am grateful beyond words to Detective Mark Riddering, who was tireless, accessible and simply wonderful to my family and me during the long process of obtaining the arrest warrant; and District Attorney Christie Schultz-Stanley, whose grasp of the details, indefatigable advocacy, warmth and accessibility remained, until justice was served, both of blessed memory. The Dive Team (SCUBA) of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office. Through this experience, I'm much more aware of and grateful for all First Responders everywhere. Jeanni Buzzelli, then the Victim Witness Supervisor

in the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office. Jeanni shepherded us through our emotional nightmare and the daunting legal maze with compassionate strength. It was Jeanni who planted the perennial seed to write this book, telling me I was "a voice for the voiceless." Beth Schick (now Bailey), then Sr. Asst. Criminal Investigator with the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office, and currently the Restitution Recovery Specialist, Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office. Terry, my beautiful sister & mother of my beloved niece, Anne. Anne's father, Earl; and my wonderful nephew, Anne's brother, Jimmy. My former Board of Directors at the Marin Interfaith Council, fellow clergy and lay members who were there for me in countless ways. Rev. Deanna Euritt, who stood by me and accompanied me to all the proceedings. Rabbi Lavey Yitzchak Derby, who was kind enough to read an early draft and whose words, "I'll never read the Psalms the same way again" became an affirming and sustaining gift to me. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Olufemi Akognon and his wife Freda, whose love and faith helped sustain me after receiving the news. Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, who read the earliest drafts. Kushner's telling me that I "did a beautiful job with it" was the unbiased blessing I needed, and his words have echoed over the years nudging me on. Gary Giacomini, J.D. who was kind enough to read the manuscript pro bono, to ensure I was on solid ground legally, and then warmly affirmed my work as mentor and friend. John Graykoski, who gifted me with an unspeakably precious Golden Retriever from Canine Companions for Independence; that eight-week old bundle of joy became

my constant companion and healer. Dr. Ruth Daniels, DVM with Canine Companions for Independence, the caring and perceptive Breeding Coordinator who selected and paired me with Monty, as my Social Dog. Congresswoman Jackie Speier, who was a California State Assemblywoman at the time, and invited me to speak at a state-wide conference on Reducing the Incidence of Domestic Violence. Val Stilson, RN who lovingly stood with me as I wept in front of over 400 people before I spoke. JoAnn Pelissetti, colleague at the Marin Community Foundation and spunky friend, who read the early manuscript and gave me a pivotal book as a guiding gift; the Grand & wonderful Terri Ewing; and Dr. Tom Peters, for highlighting the existence of shimmering facets. David and Natalia Warburg, Barbara Waxman, Dr. Nahid Angha, Bob Edwards, David J. Rowley, and so many others who read earlier versions and made valuable comments. Jim and Roberta Swan, who suggested I contact Barbara Moulton. Barbara challenged me, and recommended Scott Edelstein, who became my Editor. Scott grasped my vision for this book, then worked patiently, perceptively, and with surgical precision to help me reach my goal. Without Scott's expert guidance the manuscript would have remained just that. My family, especially Libby Parks Compton, for showing me the larger value of this book; and my amazing brother, David J. Ingram, for always believing in me. My chosen family, The Rev. Dr. Sandra R. Brown, Hope Lugo, Evie Trevethan, Lynn Jones, Rev. Sue Fleenor, Joan H. Barr, and Lucy Courtney, who have supported me through all these years. Deep gratitude to Don Green of

the Napoleon Hill Foundation, and Bob Proctor, for their inspired & inspiring teachings and kind encouragement. Abiding appreciation to those who took time to read and write pre-publication blurbs for the book. And my whole-hearted gratitude to Billi Grossman, for her steadfastness in all ways. May this book be a comfort and joy to those who read it; and a glory to God with us, the Holy One who can make all things new.

# About This Book



Ask six thoughtful people what this book is about and you'll receive six different answers. The book addresses human complexities and the miraculous ways of the Holy, and such workings have many facets.

*Broken Ground of the Soul* is about a long journey which begins with betrayal, wrenching loss, and mute incredulity. It is about trying to make sense of the senseless, and grappling with despair's crippling aftermath.

Through the readily available healing power of ancient, sacred texts and divine importunity, a miracle of transformation occurs. For what is impossible with us, is nonetheless possible with God. Ultimately, the restoration of joy became a wholly unexpected reality.

The book tells how to access a timeless, regenerative power which God is perennially and persistently extending to each of us in every moment.

While I believe in miracles, I do not believe they occur

outside the created order of things, thus making them impossible to explain within the natural laws of our universe. I think they're in perfect resonance with laws which may be outside our awareness.

Our natural world is a supreme purveyor of understanding. In eleven simple words, Albert Einstein issues a compelling invitation and makes a sweeping claim. "Look deep into Nature, and then you will understand everything better."

Nature gazing enables us to plumb the depths of the quantifiable, while pondering the distant reaches of the ineffable. We are luminous energy and clay of earth, fashioned from the dust of far flung stars, and we'll someday turn to ash. We are also more than our bodies. We have thoughts, feelings, will, choice and volition. We are spiritual beings.

These intimate reflections began on tear-stained pages in my private journal. Over an extended amount of time, the story moves through unspeakable loss to verdant new life. One day I realized I was a living example of the Hegelian dialectic.

The Thesis is that Life is sacred, beautiful, and eternal. The Antithesis is that Death surrounds us and is inevitable. Ultimately, the Synthesis is that we can choose to receive and rest in that sacred peace which passes all understanding, defies so-called reality, and transcends our circumstances. We can nimbly live with fear and love, dread and hope, suffering and awe, deep knowing and impenetrable mystery.

Our existence lies within the thrill and throe of dueling

realities. We seek stillness atop a whirling planet and silence amid the din of days. Sometimes we are out of sync, other times we're in complete harmony. Contradictions and miracles abound.

Ours is a dialectical existence. We live an amphibious life in a both/and world. Thankfully, we are designed and equipped to live in two worlds. But these worlds are not land and water: they are flesh and spirit.

We are forever navigating between one reality and an equally real, compellingly commensurate opposite. We must find the synthesis, the resolution, the higher perspective, again and again.

We acknowledge that Life's contradictions, the tensiveness within the Biblical texts, and the Hegelian Dialectic, exemplify the very nature of our existence.

So while contradictions and miracles may be beyond our ability to explain, they are well within our ability to experience. Miracles are not only within reach, we can pursue them with the predictability of the Law of Cause and Effect. Given that, this book is also akin to a multi-dimensional treasure map, which reveals the ever-present, life-transforming, healing power of the Psalms.



# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ix
About This Book.....	xiii
Preface.....	xix
Psalm 57: Life's Storms of Destruction and God's Wings of Refuge.....	1
Psalm 55: The Ultimate Betrayal .....	7
Psalm 64: Protection for the Complainant; Dismay, Calamity and Ruin for the Perpetrator .....	10
Psalm 139: Grief's Terrible Gift and God's Inescapable Presence .....	15
Psalm 34: How Evil Slays the Wicked .....	19
Psalm 37 The Way of Anger or Trust: What God Requires is Always for Our Benefit .....	23
Psalm 144 and Psalm 8: Dueling Realities: We Can Be the Cup or the Lake .....	28
Psalm 31: Hope Displaces Despair .....	34
Psalm 86 : Make Life Happy Again .....	40

Psalm 77: Closing the Distance .....	44
The F Word .....	47
Psalm 84 : Through the Valley of Weeping to Springs and Pools of Blessing.....	54
Psalm 66 : Choosing Between Two Pains.....	59
Psalm 77 and Psalm 126: The Mystery of Sowing in Tears and Reaping in Joy.....	67
A Note on the Translations.....	71
About the Author .....	72

# Preface



Psalm 34 offers us two life-sustaining promises: “God is close to the brokenhearted;” and God delivers “those crushed in spirit.” These promises are not contingent upon us. They are timeless assurances from God.

The biblical text doesn’t say God is close to the brokenhearted if we believe, or when we ask, or once we are worthy, or if we have repented, or as soon as we measure up.

If we are brokenhearted, God is near us. When we are crushed in spirit, God can deliver us. We need only receive what is near. The One who created galaxies beyond the outer reaches of space, and designed shimmering sunsets and sunrises around the world, is within our midst. The One who fashioned us in our mother’s womb, and who exists before and beyond time, is near to the brokenhearted.

In *Tales of the Hasidim* by Martin Buber, there is a poignant story attributed to Rabbi Moshe Leib called “The Way of Life.” It includes this passage: “The way in this world is like the edge of a blade. On this side is the netherworld, and

on that side is the netherworld, and the way of life lies in between.”

On this knife edge, there are many kinds of pain and many types of betrayal. We may be betrayed by family, friends, or strangers; authority figures; systems and institutions; even our own bodies.

Yet deep grief can give way to restored hope. After years of desolation and denial, belief can be reborn, richer and stronger than ever. Eventually, life’s simple pleasures can reappear on the horizon.

In the words of Soren Kierkegaard, “Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.” Yet it is also true that we can learn from pain and our losses, transforming them into lessons imbued with value.

During this process, we may be told that it is time to get on with our life. But who can tell another when it has been long enough? Who can presume to dictate the inner workings of a crushed spirit and a broken heart? There is no getting on with life in that sense. Life as we knew it is gone; it has been forever altered. Life isn’t something we simply resume. It must be re-fashioned to accommodate a different reality. Grief never ends; it abides. It must be incorporated into what remains of who we are and who we will become.

Ultimately, if we are to make it back from the brink, get back on the blade’s edge and move forward, we must freely and willingly come to matters of faith, trust, and forgiveness; to belief and conviction; and to healing and wholeness—but

in our own time. Anything less is coercion. It is inauthentic, and it will neither last nor bring us peace. We need to heal and recover it in our own time, with however much support and insight we are open to receiving.

We do not go through this process alone. We are never alone. Ever. There is comfort available, even when it seems impossible. We remain in God's presence, even when we cannot feel it, do not believe it, and are absolutely certain that we are desolate, doomed, forsaken, and abandoned.

Love, healing, and wholeness are continuously being extended to us, even while we refuse to be comforted. Even when we are convinced that no one understands, we are completely understood by God.

Sometimes when we pray from a harsh and arid place within ourselves, God does not answer. But that does not mean God is absent or not listening. It means that God has quietly come and is sojourning with us.

Words are often inadequate vessels. Yet in the Psalms, these realities are intimately known and exquisitely expressed. These timeless texts name our mute incredulity; articulate our groanings with precision; and portray the full range of human emotion, thought, and experience.

The Psalms offer a uniquely clear and powerful understanding of human nature, and our human condition, in all their complexity. The Psalms speak to our murkiest questions, giving voice with bold simplicity to what is beyond words.

The words of the Psalmists also have regenerative power; they hold sparkling pools of blessing and fountains of revelation and healing.

Please join me on this healing journey through the Psalms.

# PSALM 57

## Life's Storms of Destruction and God's Wings of Refuge



**Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,  
for in thee my soul takes refuge;  
in the shadow of thy wings I will take refuge,  
till the storms of destruction pass by.**

**(Psalm 57:1)**

We are flesh and spirit, aware of suffocating dread and breathtaking awe. Our bodies, wonderfully and intricately wrought, can experience excruciating pain and exquisite pleasure. Life holds wrenching anguish and sublime goodness. We live with the stark realities of fear and love; shadow and light; sorrow and joy; the inevitability of death and the regenerative power of life. Our world is dangerous and beautiful.

A shattering phone call, a heart-wrenching diagnosis, a cruel betrayal of trust, an abuse of power—all announce a coming storm of devastation or destruction. They can also

## BROKEN GROUND OF THE SOUL

summon us to find wings of refuge and take cover.

No life is exempt from turbulence. Although it visits each of us differently, our humanness and vulnerability in the face of it are shared.

One way to confront devastation and destruction is to name it. This helps us be more aware of it, and gives us some power in the face of it.

M. Scott Peck has written about evil in his insightful book *People of the Lie*. Dr. Peck defines evil as that which is in opposition to life. As his young son observed, evil is *live* spelled backward. Evil is the antithesis of life, and seeks to diminish or destroy the life force. Peck wrote:

It has, in short, to do with killing. Specifically, it has to do with murder – namely, unnecessary killing, killing that is not required for biological survival. Let us not forget this. There are some who have written about evil so intellectually that it comes out sounding abstract to the point of irrelevancy. Murder is not abstract.

Dr. Peck does not restrict his definition of evil to corporeal murder. Whatever kills the spirit, or attempts to kill it, is evil as well.

How tenuous, fleeting, and fragile life can be; how glorious, radiant, and tenacious. As we make our way in this world, we can go along for years without so much as a toothache. Then we may be yanked out of our comfort zone and hurled off the edge of the blade, tumbling into a netherworld.

## PSALM 57

Then we must somehow wrestle our way back, regain our footing, reestablish our balance, and, often, redefine who we understand ourselves to be.

When we are subjected to trauma or betrayal, at some point we attempt to understand what has happened. We hope to find some way to re-orient ourselves; re-establish our balance on the edge of the blade; comprehend the incomprehensible; and cope. When we or someone we care about has been wronged, we may also want judgment rendered and justice done.

**Seek the Lord and his strength,  
Seek his presence continually!  
Remember the wonderful works that he has done,  
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,  
O offspring of Abraham his servant,  
sons of Jacob, his chosen one!  
He is the Lord our God;  
his judgments are in all the earth.  
He is mindful of his covenant forever,  
of the word that he commanded, for a thousand  
generations...**

(Psalm 105:4-8)

It is normal to want redress. But as persons of faith, we understand that vengeance is not ours to take. Vengeance belongs to God alone.

Nevertheless, our emotions can be raw, ragged, and fierce. One of the many ways in which the Psalms are so potent,

## BROKEN GROUND OF THE SOUL

so affirming, and so comforting, is their clear expression of this ferocity.

C.S. Lewis saw in the Psalms a powerful distinction, one that brilliantly and beautifully captures our very human longing for the wronged to be vindicated and perpetrators to be held accountable. In his “Reflections on the Psalms,” Lewis noted that if there is one concept that gets most Christians trembling, it is judgment. The Day of Judgment is a day of dread.

Christians typically pray for deliverance from this judgment. Lewis, a devout Christian theologian, was very surprised when he first noticed how the Psalmists express their feelings about God’s judgment. He observed that in the Psalms, God’s judgment is sought out and welcomed. People ask for it, cry out for it, wail for its coming. When promised or rendered, it is cause for rejoicing. Lewis wrote,

The ancient Jews, like ourselves, think of God’s judgement in terms of an earthly court of justice. The difference is that the Christian pictures the case to be tried as a criminal case with himself in the dock; the Jew pictures it as a civil case with himself as the plaintiff. The one hopes for acquittal, or rather for pardon; the other hopes for a resounding triumph with heavy damages.

For many people of faith, however, it is possible to empathize with both positions at once. This doesn’t just apply to the Holy One’s judgement. It can also be true in an ordinary, Earthly court.

## PSALM 57

I recently received an email from a friend, asking for prayers. My friend's niece had been in a car accident and was injured. Details were few; I responded immediately, and began praying for all concerned. About a week later my friend let me know that her niece is 17 years old and fell asleep at the wheel. My friend explains that her niece will at some point be arrested and stand trial. The email reads, in part, "...The most urgent prayers at the moment are that my niece is tried as a juvenile and that she gets a compassionate judge."

In a subsequent email my friend writes her niece "...has now learned that in her falling asleep at the wheel that the other driver died in the head on crash..." The moment I read this new information my heart immediately goes out to the other family. The words "the other driver died in the head on crash" reverberate within me. I find those words dangerously close to blaming the victim. In my mind the other driver did not "die in the head on crash." The other driver was *killed* in the head on crash.

Even as we understand a friend's pain, concern and fear, we feel compassion for the other family. My friend wants leniency and compassion, and told me the Prosecutor wants her niece tried as an adult. Adult privileges come with adult responsibilities.

Not long ago I saw an unattributed quote which resonates. "Society has gotten to the point where everybody has a right but nobody has a responsibility." This tragedy is heart-wrenching for all concerned. The responsible party hopes

## BROKEN GROUND OF THE SOUL

for leniency, while the victim's family understandably hopes for justice, possibly with heavy damages.

We are always and at once convicted and comforted by the Psalms, because in them we are shown how fully our inexplicable feelings are understood.