

**DAVID AVSHALOMOV - "I Bend the Knee of My Heart"  
(Canticle 14-Menasseh).**

This work expresses a deeply penitent prayer of the truly wicked Hebrew King Menasseh, who had much to repent, including the sacrificing of his own son to an alien God. The text was suggested by conductor James Person, who helped me to condense the long prayer to its essence. I have set it in my "Old Testament Anglican" style—like my usual tonal modern lyrical vein but more open, with somewhat more traditional harmonies and distinct, long melodic arches. Though sometimes richly voiced and contrapuntal, it reflects my recent efforts to make my vocal music ever more direct, clear, simple, and emotionally honest. And it is totally rooted in the words and their meaning and feeling.

The work proceeds organically through a linked series of tone-painting sections, moving from hushed awe to quaking fear to pleading for mercy and back to dumbfounded awe, settling on a "mystery" chord on "all that the mind can fathom." Then it gently turns to nakedly beseech the Creator for mercy ("I bend the knee of my heart") and confess wickedness, and finally rolls into a rising peroration, adding voice upon voice in imitation, demonstrating with winding repetitions how Menasseh would praise his Lord "without ceasing," building to a high, ecstatic peak, then sinking softly to a beatific, lushly-harmonized twofold Amen.

This work was commissioned in 2006 for the Anglican Chorale of Southern California, by my friend and choirmate Richard Beatty; they sang the premiere wonderfully the next Fall. It received a second performance that same season (!) by Cantori Domino under Bunny Thornburgh.

*(Note by the composer)*