

Serve Hashem with Simchah

מזמור לתורה

NOTE: Even if rushed, it is best to not skip this tefillah because of its importance. Therefore, every pasuk is explained.

Omit on Erev Pesach, Chol Hamoed Pesach, and Erev Yom Kippur.

תהילים ק

מְזֹמֹר לְתוֹכָהּ—A song of thanksgiving (and/or, a song sung when the Korban Todah was brought in the Beis Hamikdash): הֲרִיעוּ לַיהוָה—The entire earth should call out to Hashem in thanks. עֲבֹדוּ אֶת יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה—Serve Hashem with simchah—happiness and peace of mind! בָּאוּ לִפְנֵי הַיְיָ—The way to get close to Him is through gladness! יְהוָה כִּי יְהוָה—Know that Hashem is THE One Who takes care of us (and/or, י-ה-ו-ה—the Name that represents God’s attribute of mercy, is the same as אלהים—the Name that represents God’s attribute of Justice—since

מְזֹמֹר לְתוֹכָהּ, הֲרִיעוּ
 לַיהוָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ:
 עֲבֹדוּ אֶת יְהוָה
 בְּשִׂמְחָה, בָּאוּ לִפְנֵי
 הַיְיָ: דַּעוּ כִּי יְהוָה
 הוּא אֱלֹהִים, הוּא
 עֲשָׂנוּ, וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ
 עִמּוֹ וְצֵאן מִרְעִיתוֹ:
 בָּאוּ שְׁעָרָיו בְּתוֹכָהּ,
 חֲצֵרְתָיו בְּתֵהָלָה,
 הוֹדוּ לוֹ בְּרָכוּ שְׁמוֹ:
 כִּי טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם
 חֲסִדּוֹ, וְעַד דֹּר וָדֹר
 אֲמוֹנָתוֹ:

Hashem’s judgments of us are all for our benefit!). He created us, and we Bnei Yisrael are His unique nation, which He shepherds throughout history. —We enter the Beis Hamikdash (today, we enter our mini Beis Hamikdash—our shuls and homes) with thanksgiving; —praise Hashem for all that He does for us. —For Hashem is the sole absolute Good, His kindness is constant and daily in our lives (even when we cannot see it); —and His Presence is consistent in all generations, past and future.

Instant Insight:

Why do we say Mizmor L’Sodah daily when the original Korban Todah was brought only when a person miraculously survived some life-threatening situation (like when we “bentch gome!” today)? In truth, every minute of our day is a miracle—we just don’t realize it! To demand that every individual go to the Beis Hamikdash every day and offer a Korban Todah is too great a burden. But now that tefillah has taken the place of korbanos, we say Mizmor L’Sodah daily to make us appreciate the “natural” miracles we take for granted.

Instant Insight:

Since this is really about the Korban Todah, why is it not in the section of Korbanos? The answer is that this korban is very different. The midrash tells us that when Mashiach comes, the only personal voluntary korban that will be brought will be the Korban Todah. Why? Because even when Mashiach comes, it will still be a struggle for us not to take for granted all the good we have!

Instant Insight:

It is so hard to “serve Hashem with happiness and peace of mind (בשמחה)” when our lives seem so difficult! The key—the word בשמחה rearranged spells the word מחשבה—Happiness and peace of mind does not happen by itself. It comes from choosing to look at your life from a certain perspective. If you put your mind (מחשבה) to it—you can have peace of mind (בשמחה)!

Hashem as Master of Nature, Hashem as Master of History

יהי כבוד

יהי כבוד—May the Presence of Hashem be felt and seen clearly in the world; (*that way it will be easier for us to act appropriately*) and thus Hashem will be pleased with us—His creations.

From the East to the West—the entire world, the Heavens and the Earth and all the nations proclaim the glory of Hashem and His absolute and eternal rulership over “nature” and the course of world history—from the beginning of time till the end of days.

רבות מחשבות בלב איש—Humans have many plans, thoughts and intentions; וְעַתָּה הִיא תִּקּוּם—but in the end, only the plan of Hashem will prevail. The “plan” Hashem has for history is eternal and spans all generations (*which is why we have difficulty grasping its entirety*).

כי בחר יהוה בציון, ארצה—Hashem has chosen Eretz Yisrael as His special land, and us, Bnei Yisrael, as His (סגולתו) special treasure.

כי לא יושט יהוה עמו—He will never destroy Bnei Yisrael or abandon His land.

—(Even if we mess up.) He will forgive our sins, give us another chance; הַמְלִךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם קְרָאֵנוּ—Hashem, please (*continue*) to save us and answer our tefillos whenever we call out to You.

FAQ:

If in the end, “only the plan of Hashem will prevail,” no matter what humans think and plan, where does our free will fit in?

Answer:

Complex and deep question! See Appendix 5.

Instant Insight:

We are referred to as the “עם” טגולה—special treasure” of Hashem. The word segulah is related to the word “segol”—the three-dot triangle nekudah that appears under letters (that makes the “eh” sound). No matter which way you turn the segol, it remains the very same shape—the same segol.

Similarly, Bnei Yisrael, no matter where we are or what choices we might make, we are always the unique nation of Hashem. We cannot escape that, and He will not let us go.

יְהִי כְבוֹד יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם, יִשְׁמַח יְהוָה בַּמַּעֲשָׂיו: יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבָרָךְ, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם: מִמְזֻרַח שָׁמֶשׁ עַד מְבוֹאָו, מֵהַלֵּל שֵׁם יְהוָה: רֵם עַל כָּל גּוֹיִם יְהוָה, עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ: יְהוָה שֹׁמֵר לְעוֹלָם, יְהוָה זֹכָרָךְ לְדֹר וָדֹר: יְהוָה בְּשָׁמַיִם הַכִּין כֶּסֶף אוֹ, וּמְלָכוֹתָו בְּכָל מְשָׁלָה: יִשְׁמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וּתְגַל הָאָרֶץ, וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם יְהוָה מִלֶּךְ: יְהוָה מִלֶּךְ, יְהוָה מִלֶּךְ, יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד: יְהוָה מִלֶּךְ עוֹלָם וָעֶד, אֲבָדוּ גוֹיִם מֵאַרְצוֹ: יְהוָה הַפִּיר עֲצַת גּוֹיִם, הִנְיָא מַחֲשָׁבוֹת עַמִּים: רַבּוֹת מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּלִב אִישׁ, וְעֲצַת יְהוָה הִיא תִּקּוּם: עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּעֲמֹד, מַחֲשָׁבוֹת לְבוֹ לְדֹר וָדֹר: כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי, הוּא צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֹד: כִּי בָחַר יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן, אֲרָצָה לְמוֹשָׁב לָו: כִּי יַעֲקֹב בָּחַר לֹו יְהוָה, יִשְׂרָאֵל לְסַגְלָתוֹ: כִּי לֹא יִשָּׁשׁ יְהוָה עָמוֹ, וְנַחֲלָתוֹ לֹא יַעֲזֹב: וְהוּא רַחוּם יִכְפֹּר עוֹן וְלֹא יִשְׁחִית, וְהִרְבֵּה לְהָשִׁיב אָפוֹ, וְלֹא יַעִיר כָּל חַמְתּוֹ: יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה, הַמְלִיךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם קְרָאֵנוּ:

Last Six Chapters of Tehillim—the Core of Pesukei D’Zimrah

אשרי / הללויה: הללי נפשי/ כי טוב/ הללו את יהוה/ שירו ליהוה/ הללו אל

אשרי

Ashrei is the core of Pesukei D’Zimrah. If one has limited time, one should at least say Ashrei. It is said three times a day (twice in Shacharis and once at Minchah). It follows the aleph-beis. The significance is that in all areas of our life (aleph to tav)—personally and nationally—we need Hashem and His help, we are supported by Him, and His providence is constant. And this is true not only when our lives seem clear and bright (Shacharis—the morning), but also when things seem to be getting dark and not so bright or clear (Minchah—as the sun sets). Because of its importance, it is explained here line by line. The remaining five chapters of Tehillim will be explained with a basic overview of each chapter.

For a set of different Instant Insights on Ashrei, please see the Ashrei of Minchah.

תהילים קמה

The following is a preface to Tehillim 145, which begins below. These words express that it is a wonderful and joyous opportunity to praise Hashem and not, chas v’shalom, a burden!

אשרי יושבי ביתך—Happy are those who (*wherever they are*) are living in the house of Hashem (*are living a meaningful and spiritually growing life*); עור יהללוך סלה—they will constantly praise You (*since they see all the circumstances of their life as*

אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵּיתְךָ, עוֹד
יִהְיֶה לְךָ סֵלָה: אֲשֶׁרִי הָעַם
שֶׁנִּכְבְּה לּוֹ, אֲשֶׁרִי הָעַם שִׂיְהוּהוּ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

opportunities for growth) לוֹ. אשרי העם שכבה לוֹ. Happy and fortunate are we, the nation (Bnei Yisrael) that has all this (*glorious history and great mission*);

אשרי העם שיהוה אלהיו—happy and fortunate are we, the nation (Bnei Yisrael)—that has Hashem as our personal God Who takes care of us.

תהלה לך—A song of praise by David HaMelech (קמה):

תִּהְיֶה לְךָ לְדוֹד, אֲרוֹמְמֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי
הַמַּלְאָךְ, וְאֶבְרַכְּךָ שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם
וָעֶד:

אֲרוֹמְמֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ—I will exalt and revere You (*since I realize that the essence of Hashem as my personal God and Ruler of the entire universe*

is way beyond our human comprehension); וְאֶבְרַכְּךָ שְׁמֶךָ—and (*at the same time*) I thank You (*in the following verses*) for all that You have done and will do (*for me personally and for our nation*); לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד—since the beginning of time and until the end of days.

בְּכֹל יוֹם אֲבִרְכֶךָ, וְאֵהְלֶלְךָ
 (You are the Source of everything that happens to me each and every day, and) I thank You for it all (even though some of those things are hard to understand); וְעַד—
 and in the end times I will truly praise You (as all becomes clear).

בְּכֹל יוֹם אֲבִרְכֶךָ, וְאֵהְלֶלְךָ
 שְׁמִיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

גְּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד,
 וְלִגְדֻלְתּוֹ אֵין חֵקֶר;
 (As much as we will thank and praise Hashem, and proclaim) Hashem is “great” and is “extremely praised”; וְלִגְדֻלְתּוֹ אֵין חֵקֶר—

גְּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד,
 וְלִגְדֻלְתּוֹ אֵין חֵקֶר:

(the truth is that) the greatness of Hashem is beyond our real comprehension (“the more you know, the more you realize that you don’t know”).

דוֹר לְדוֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיךָ,
 וְיַגִּידוּ לְבָנָיו
 (Each generation will praise Your actions to the next generation; and will tell them of Your miraculous) mighty deeds (that they experienced).

דוֹר לְדוֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיךָ,
 וְיַגִּידוּ לְבָנָיו:

הִדַּר כְּבוֹד הַיְדוּדָה, וְדַבְּרֵי
 נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֵׁיחָה;
 I will discuss (with everyone) the beauty of Your natural world; and as well as speak of Your wonders (which are beyond our comprehension).

הִדַּר כְּבוֹד הַיְדוּדָה, וְדַבְּרֵי
 נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֵׁיחָה:

וְעֲזוּזוֹ נִרְאֵתֶיךָ יְאִמְרוּ,
 וְגִדּוּלְתֶךָ אֲסַפְּרָנָה;
 (Says David HaMelech:) Others (are impressed by and) speak of Your miraculous wonders; and I speak of Your constant chessed and daily greatness (which is no less miraculous)!

וְעֲזוּזוֹ נִרְאֵתֶיךָ יְאִמְרוּ,
 וְגִדּוּלְתֶךָ אֲסַפְּרָנָה:

זָכַר רַב טוֹבָךָ יְבִיעוּ,
 וְצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ יִרְנְנוּ;
 They (one generation passing down the heritage to the next) will speak of Your abundant goodness (notwithstanding whatever difficulties that generation may have endured); and they sing about Your generosity (that Hashem blesses us with more than the strict letter of the law would dictate).

זָכַר רַב טוֹבָךָ יְבִיעוּ,
 וְצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ יִרְנְנוּ:

חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה,
 אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְגִדּוֹל חֲסֵד;
 Hashem is gracious (giving us goodness more than we deserve) and merciful; (and that is apparent in the fact that He is)

חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה, אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם
 וְגִדּוֹל חֲסֵד:

slow to anger, and thus shows His true greatness through His abundant chessed.

טוב יהיה לכל
 Hashem is good to all (of
 humanity—even those who
 have not yet lived up to their

טוֹב יִהְיֶה לְכָל,
 וְרַחֲמָיו
 עַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו:

and His mercy extends to all that
 He has created (even the smallest of the animal world).

יודוך יהיה כל מעשיך
 Your creations will thank
 You (for Your goodness);
 וחסידריך יברכוכה—

יִדְוֹךָ יְהוָה כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ,
 וְחֲסִידֶיךָ יְבָרְכֶיךָ:

but Your
 righteous ones (who have used their God-given gifts to increase
 sanctity and goodness into the world) will draw increased energy
 from You, the Source of all blessing, and in turn (by their good
 deeds) they will increase blessing in Your world.

כבוד מלכותך יאמרו
 They (Your righteous ones)
 will discuss the glory of
 Your Kingdom (the Hand

כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ יֹאמְרוּ,
 וְגִבּוֹרָתְךָ יְדַבְּרוּ:

of Hashem as seen in the beauty and complexity of the natural
 world—which we take for granted, and therefore must be discussed
 a lot); וגבורתך ידברו—and they will also tell of Your mighty open
 miracles (which are clear and do not need much discussion).

להודיע לבני האדם
 But when they speak to
 the common man, first
 they tell about Hashem's
 might and open miracles

לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבְנֵי הָאָדָם
 גִּבּוֹרָתוֹ, וְכְבוֹד הַדֵּר
 מִלְכוּתוֹ:

(since that is easy for people to see); and (from
 the open miracles they) then explain to the common people how to
 see the Hand of Hashem in the daily miracles of “nature.”

מלכותך מלכות כל
 Your Kingship is over all
 the “worlds” (the multitude
 of spiritual spheres and
 worlds that are beyond our

מַלְכוּתְךָ מִלְכוּת כָּל
 עֲלָמִים, וּמִמְשַׁלְתְּךָ
 בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר:

comprehension); and וממשלתך בכל דור ודור—Your rulership spans
 eternity and governs each unique generation (in its own special
 role in Your master plan, all of which is also beyond our human
 comprehension).

Instant Insight:

There is no נ in Ashrei—why? The Maharal says that these pesukim, starting with the letters of the aleph-beis, express the inherent meaning (based on Kabbalah) of those letters. The inherent meaning of נ is נפילה—a falling. Here David HaMelech is describing what Hashem does, and Hashem does not cause our fallings! Our mistakes are the result of our own poor choices! In the next verse we are told what Hashem does in regard to our fallings—סומך יתנה לכל—the הנגלים—He helps us get back up!

סוּמְךָ יְהוָה לְכָל הַנְּפֹלִים
 הַנְּפֹלִים, וְזוֹקֵף לְכָל הַנְּפֹפִים:
 —סוּמְךָ יְהוָה לְכָל הַנְּפֹלִים
 (Though Hashem is “busy”
 ruling over the entire
 universe and eternity, yet
 still He looks after each and
 every one of us constantly, and) He supports every individual who
 has fallen (spiritually or emotionally); וְזוֹקֵף לְכָל הַנְּפֹפִים—
 and He helps every person who is bent over (from his struggles) to get up
 (and continue his climb toward personal perfection).

**Crucial Instant
 Insight:**

It does not say that Hashem is close to all “קראתו” — who now call to Him with honesty and integrity. Rather, “אשר יקראתו” — who will call to Him with honesty, in the future tense. This means that if right now you have a very “up and down” relationship with Hashem; and you struggle with being 100 percent sincere, 100 percent of the time, and at times you are a bit of a hypocrite as far as what you promise Hashem and what you end up doing—still, as long as you are committed to being “יקראתו” — your goal is to be completely sincere, honest, and genuine in your relationship with Hashem—then already now He will listen to Your requests for help to get there!

עֵינֵי כָל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,
 וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת
 אֲכֻלָּם בְּעֵתוֹ:
 —עֵינֵי כָל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 (Therefore) every creature,
 from the smallest to the
 greatest, looks to You with
 hope (that You will take
 care of them); וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת אֲכֻלָּם בְּעֵתוֹ—
 and You do give each one its (physical, spiritual, and emotional) sustenance—just at the
 time they really need it.

פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ,
 וּמַשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רִצּוֹן:
 —פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ
 (Thus we proclaim emphatically that)
 You open Your hand; וּמַשְׁבִּיעַ
 לְכָל חַי רִצּוֹן—and give each
 person what they need in order to be satisfied. (If you feel you are
 not getting what you need—focus on the next verse...)

צַדִּיק יְהוָה בְּכָל דְרָכָיו,
 וְחַסִּיד בְּכָל מַעֲשָׂיו:
 —צַדִּיק יְהוָה בְּכָל דְרָכָיו
 All that Hashem does is just
 and righteous (even though
 as humans it does not always
 appear that way to us);
 וְחַסִּיד בְּכָל מַעֲשָׂיו—and He applies that justice with great kindness.

קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְכָל קֹרְאָיו,
 לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֵהוּ
 בְּאֵמֶת:
 —קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְכָל קֹרְאָיו
 (In truth,) Hashem is close to
 all who call to Him; לְכָל אֲשֶׁר
 יִקְרָאֵהוּ—but one must
 call out to Hashem with
 emes—honesty and sincerity. (This means that (1) you do not say
 one thing in your tefillos but then by your actions distance yourself from
 Hashem; (2) in general, whenever you speak it is with honesty, i.e., you
 are a “man of your word” and sincere; and (3) it is clear from your actions
 that you are sincere in your requests from Hashem, since you are doing
 whatever you personally can do to achieve those goals.)

רצון יראיו יַעֲשֶׂה, וְאֵת שׁוֹעֲתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיוֹשִׁיעֵם—He fulfills the will of those who fear Him; וְאֵת שׁוֹעֲתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיוֹשִׁיעֵם—and He hears their cries (*in times of trouble*) and He saves them. (*That is for those who serve Hashem from fear* (מיראה).)

רָצוֹן יִרְאִיו יַעֲשֶׂה, וְאֵת שׁוֹעֲתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיוֹשִׁיעֵם:

שׁוֹמֵר יְהוָה אֶת כָּל אֲהַבָּיו (מאהבה), He will protect them from troubles in the first place! (Alternatively,) for those who serve Hashem from love (מאהבה), He reserves and preserves (שומר) their ultimate and eternal reward to be given in Olam Haba; וְאֵת כָּל יִשְׁמִיד הַרְשָׁעִים—and Hashem will destroy all evil.

שׁוֹמֵר יְהוָה אֶת כָּל אֲהַבָּיו, וְאֵת כָּל הַרְשָׁעִים יִשְׁמִיד:

תְּהַלֵּל יְהוָה יְדַבֵּר פִּי, וְיִבְרַךְ כָּל בָּשָׂר שֶׁם קָדְשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד—May my mouth declare the praises of Hashem (*so powerfully and sincerely, that*); וְיִבְרַךְ כָּל בָּשָׂר שֶׁם קָדְשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד—everyone (*will be so impacted by my words and actions, that they too*) will bless Hashem and see Him as the Source for all blessings—for eternity!

תְּהַלֵּל יְהוָה יְדַבֵּר פִּי, וְיִבְרַךְ כָּל בָּשָׂר שֶׁם קָדְשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

(And to sum up that entire Chapter 145 in one sentence:)

וְאֵנַחְנוּ נְבָרַךְ יְהוָה—And each of us (*in our way, based on our own life experiences,*) will thank Hashem and see Him as the Source of blessing in our individual lives; וְאֵנַחְנוּ נְבָרַךְ יְהוָה—now and forever (*no matter what will happen! To sum it all up in one word:*); הַלְלוּיָהּ—whatever happens, praise Hashem!

וְאֵנַחְנוּ נְבָרַךְ יְהוָה, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם הַלְלוּיָהּ:

תהילים כמו

The focus of this chapter is on the individual—each person praises Hashem in their own way and through their own life; and Hashem's providence is on each individual in the world.

הַלְלוּיָהּ, הַלְלִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת יְהוָה: אֵהְלֵלָה יְהוָה בְּחַיִּי, אֲזַמְּרָה לְאֱלֹהֵי בְעוֹדִי: אֵל תִּבְטְחוּ בְנַדִּיבִים, בְּכֵן אָדָם שֹׂאֵין לוֹ תְּשׁוּעָה: תִּצַּא רוּחוֹ יֵשֵׁב לְאֲדָמְתּוֹ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֲבָדוּ עֲשִׂתְנָתָיו: אֲשֶׁרִי שֹׂאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ, שִׁבְרוּ עַל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיוֹ: עֲשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם, הַשְׁמֵר אִמְתָּ לְעוֹלָם:

הַלְלוּיָהּ, הַלְלִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת יְהוָה: אֵהְלֵלָה יְהוָה בְּחַיִּי, אֲזַמְּרָה לְאֱלֹהֵי בְעוֹדִי: אֵל תִּבְטְחוּ בְנַדִּיבִים, בְּכֵן אָדָם שֹׂאֵין לוֹ תְּשׁוּעָה: תִּצַּא רוּחוֹ יֵשֵׁב לְאֲדָמְתּוֹ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֲבָדוּ עֲשִׂתְנָתָיו: אֲשֶׁרִי שֹׂאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ, שִׁבְרוּ עַל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיוֹ: עֲשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם, הַשְׁמֵר אִמְתָּ לְעוֹלָם: