

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 (*living a meaningful and spiritually growing life*); עור יהללך סלה—they will constantly praise You (*since they see all the circumstances of their life as opportunities for growth*). אשרי.

אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵּיתְךָ, עוֹד
יִהְיֶה לְךָ סֵלָה: אֲשֶׁרִי הָעַם
שֶׁנִּכְנָה לוֹ, אֲשֶׁרִי הָעַם שִׁיְהוּהוּ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

לוֹ—Happy and fortunate are we, the nation (*Bnei Yisrael*) that has all this (*glorious history and great mission*); אשרי העם שיהנה אלהיו—happy and fortunate are we, the nation (*Bnei Yisrael*) that has Hashem as our personal God Who takes care of us.

תהלה לדוד—A song of praise by David HaMelech (תהילים קמה): ארוםך אלהי המלך—I will exalt and revere You (*since I realize that the essence of Hashem as my personal God and Ruler of the entire universe*);

תִּהְיֶה לְדָוִד, אֲרוּמְךָ אֱלֹהֵי
הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְאַבְרָכָה שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם
וָעֶד:

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*); לעולם ועד—since the beginning of time and until the end of days.

בְּכֹל יוֹם אֲבָרְכְּךָ—(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 of days, I will truly praise You (as all becomes clear).

בְּכֹל יוֹם אֲבָרְכְּךָ, וְאַהֲלִלָּהּ
שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד, וְלִגְדֻלָּתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר—(As much as we will thank and praise Hashem, and proclaim) Hashem is “great” and is “extremely praised”; וְלִגְדֻלָּתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר—(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”).

גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד,
וְלִגְדֻלָּתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר:

דֹּר לְדֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיךָ, וְגִבּוֹרֹתֶיךָ יִגִּידוּ—Each generation will praise Your actions to the next generation; and will tell them of Your (miraculous) mighty deeds (that they experienced).

דֹּר לְדֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיךָ,
וְגִבּוֹרֹתֶיךָ יִגִּידוּ:

הֵדַר כְּבוֹד הַזֶּה, וְדַבְּרִי 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).

הֵדַר כְּבוֹד הַזֶּה, וְדַבְּרִי
נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֵׁיחָה:

וְעִזּוֹ נִזְרָאֲתֶיךָ יֹאמְרוּ, וְגִדּוֹלָתֶךָ אֲסַפְּרָנָה—(Says David HaMelech:) Others (are impressed by and) speak of Your miraculous wonders; but I speak of Your constant chessed and daily greatness (which is no less miraculous)!

וְעִזּוֹ נִזְרָאֲתֶיךָ יֹאמְרוּ,
וְגִדּוֹלָתֶךָ אֲסַפְּרָנָה:

זָכַר רַב טוֹבָךָ יִבְיְעוּ, וְצִדְקָתְךָ 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); וְצִדְקָתְךָ יִרְנְנוּ—and they sing about Your generosity (that Hashem blesses us with more than the strict letter of the law would dictate).

זָכַר רַב טוֹבָךָ יִבְיְעוּ, וְצִדְקָתְךָ
יִרְנְנוּ:

חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה—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, אֶרְךְ אֲפִים
וְגָדַל חֶסֶד:

אֶרְךְ אֲפִים וְגָדַל חֶסֶד—slow to anger, and thus shows His true greatness through His abundant chessed.

טוֹב יְהוָה לְכָל, וְרַחֲמָיו
עַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו:
Hashem—טוֹב יְהוָה לְכָל
is good to all (of
humanity—even those who
have not yet lived up to their
potential); וְרַחֲמָיו עַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו—and His mercy extends to all that
He has created (even the smallest of the animal world).

יְדוּדְךָ יְהוָה כָּל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ,
וַחֲסִידֶיךָ יִבְרְכוּכָהּ:
All of—יְדוּדְךָ יְהוָה כָּל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ
Your creations will thank
You (for Your goodness);
וַחֲסִידֶיךָ יִבְרְכוּכָהּ—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.

כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ יֹאמְרוּ,
וְגִבּוֹרָתְךָ יִדְבְּרוּ:
They—כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ יֹאמְרוּ
(Your righteous ones)
will discuss the glory of
Your Kingdom (the Hand
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); וְגִבּוֹרָתְךָ יִדְבְּרוּ—and they will also tell of Your mighty open
miracles (which are clear and do not need much discussion).

לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבְנֵי הָאָדָם
גִּבּוֹרָתוֹ, וְכְבוֹד הַדֵּר
מַלְכוּתוֹ:
לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבְנֵי הָאָדָם—
But when they speak to
the common man, first
they tell about Hashem's
might and open miracles
(since that is easy for people to see); וְכְבוֹד הַדֵּר מַלְכוּתוֹ—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.”

מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל
עֲלָמִים, וּמִמְשָׁלְתְּךָ
בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר:
מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל
Your Kingship is over all
the “worlds” (the multitude
of spiritual spheres and
worlds that are beyond our
comprehension); and דּוֹר וָדוֹר—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 יְהוָה לְכָל—He helps us get back up!

—סוּמֵךְ יְהוָה לְכָל הַנִּפְלִיִּים
(*Though Hashem is “busy”*
ruling over the entire
universe and eternity, yet
still He looks after each and

סוּמֵךְ יְהוָה לְכָל
הַנִּפְלִיִּים, וְזוֹקֵף לְכָל
הַכְּפוּפִים:

every one of us constantly, and) He supports every individual who has fallen (*spiritually or emotionally*); —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 “קראו” —who now call to Him with honesty and integrity. Rather, “אשר יקראו” —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 “קראו” —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 אֱלִיךָ יִשְׁבְּרוּ
(*Therefore*) every creature,
from the smallest to the
greatest, looks to You with
hope (*that You will take*

עֵינֵי כָל אֱלִיךָ יִשְׁבְּרוּ,
וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת
אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ:

care of them); —וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ —and You **do** give each one its (*physical, spiritual, and emotional*) sustenance—just at the time they really need it.

—פִּתְחָ אֶת יָדְךָ
(*Thus we*
proclaim emphatically that)
You open Your Hand;
—וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רְצוֹן

פִּתְחָ אֶת יָדְךָ,
וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רְצוֹן:

—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 דְּרָכָיו
that Hashem does is just
and righteous (*even though*
as humans it does not always
appear that way to us);

צַדִּיק יְהוָה בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו,
וְחֹסֶד בְּכָל מַעֲשָׁיו:

—וְחֹסֶד בְּכָל מַעֲשָׁיו —and He applies that justice with great kindness.

—קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְכָל קוֹרְאֵי
(*In truth,*) Hashem is close to
all who call to Him; **אֲשֶׁר** —
but one must call out to Hashem with

קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְכָל קוֹרְאֵי,
לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֵהוּ
בְּאֵמֶת:

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.*)

רָצוֹן יִרְאוּ יַעֲשֶׂה—He fulfills the will of those who fear Him; וְאֵת שׁוֹנְעֵתָם וְיִשְׁמַע וְיִשְׁעֵם—and He hears their cries (*in times of trouble*) and He saves them. (*That is for those who serve Hashem from fear* (מִירָאָה).)

רָצוֹן יִרְאוּ יַעֲשֶׂה, וְאֵת שׁוֹנְעֵתָם יִשְׁמַע וְיִשְׁעֵם:

שׁוֹמֵר יִהְיֶה אֶת כָּל אֲהָבָיו, (But) those who serve Hashem from love (מֵאֲהָבָה), He will protect them from troubles in the first place!

שׁוֹמֵר יִהְיֶה אֶת כָּל אֲהָבָיו, וְאֵת כָּל הָרָשָׁעִים יִשְׁמִיד:

(Alternatively,) for those who serve Hashem from love (מֵאֲהָבָה), He reserves and preserves (שׁוֹמֵר) their ultimate and eternal reward to be given in Olam Haba; וְאֵת כָּל הָרָשָׁעִים יִשְׁמִיד—and Hashem will destroy all evil.

תְּהַלֵּל יְהוָה יְדָבָר פִּי—May my mouth declare the praises of Hashem (*so powerfully and sincerely, that*); וְיְבָרֵךְ 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 יְדָבָר פִּי, וְיְבָרֵךְ כָּל בָּשָׂר שֶׁם קָדְשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

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

וְאִנְחֵנוּ נְבָרֵךְ יְהוָה, מְעַתָּה וָעֶד עוֹלָם הַלְלוּיָהּ:

וְאִנְחֵנוּ נְבָרֵךְ 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; מְעַתָּה וָעֶד עוֹלָם—now and forever (*no matter what will happen! To sum it all up in one word:*); הַלְלוּיָהּ—whatever happens, praise Hashem!

תהילים קמו

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: אֶהְלֵל יְהוָה בְּחַיִּי, אֲזַמְּרָה לְאֱלֹהֵי בְעוֹדִי: אֵל תִּבְטַחוּ בְּנִדְיָבִים, בְּבֶן אָדָם שָׁאִין לוֹ תְּשׁוּעָה: תִּצָּא רוּחוֹ יֵשֶׁב לְאֲדָמָתוֹ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֲבָדוֹ עָשְׂתָנְתִּיו: אֲשֶׁרִי שָׁאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ, שִׁבְרוּ עַל יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו: עָשָׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ אֶת

הַלְלוּיָהּ, הַלְלִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת יְהוָה: אֶהְלֵל יְהוָה בְּחַיִּי, אֲזַמְּרָה לְאֱלֹהֵי בְעוֹדִי: אֵל תִּבְטַחוּ בְּנִדְיָבִים, בְּבֶן אָדָם שָׁאִין לוֹ תְּשׁוּעָה: תִּצָּא רוּחוֹ יֵשֶׁב לְאֲדָמָתוֹ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֲבָדוֹ עָשְׂתָנְתִּיו: אֲשֶׁרִי שָׁאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ, שִׁבְרוּ עַל יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו: עָשָׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ אֶת