

Serve Hashem with Simchah

מזמור לתודה

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

מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹדָה—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. עֲבְדוּ 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! דַּעוּ כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים—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 אֱלֹהִים—the Name that represents God’s attribute of Justice—since

Hashem’s judgments of us are all for our benefit!). הוּא—He created us, וְלֹא אֲנַחְנוּ עֲמוֹ וְצֹאֵן מִרְעִיתוֹ, עֲשֵׂנוּ—We enter the Beis Hamikdash (*today, we enter our mini Beis Hamidkash—our shuls and homes*) with thanksgiving; הוֹדוּ לוֹ בְּרָכּוֹ שְׁמוֹ—praise Hashem for all that He does for us. כִּי טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ—For Hashem is the sole absolute Good, His kindness is constant and daily in our lives (*even when we cannot see it*); וְעַד דֹּר וָדֹר אָמוֹנָתוֹ—and His Presence is consistent in all generations, past and future.

מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹדָה, הֲרִיעוּ
לַיהוָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ:
עֲבְדוּ אֶת יְהוָה
בְּשִׂמְחָה, בָּאוּ לִפְנֵי
בְּרִנָּה: דַּעוּ כִּי יְהוָה
הוּא אֱלֹהִים, הוּא
עֲשֵׂנוּ, וְלֹא אֲנַחְנוּ
עֲמוֹ וְצֹאֵן מִרְעִיתוֹ:
בָּאוּ שְׁעָרָיו בְּתוֹדָה,
חֲצֵרֹתָיו בְּתִהְלָה,
הוֹדוּ לוֹ בְּרָכּוֹ שְׁמוֹ:
כִּי טוֹב יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם
חֶסֶדּוֹ, וְעַד דֹּר וָדֹר
אָמוֹנָתוֹ:

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 gomel" 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 (בְּשִׂמְחָה)" when our lives seem so difficult! The key—the word בְּשִׂמְחָה rearranged spells the word מַחְשְׁבָה—thinking. 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 (מַחְשְׁבָה) to it—you can have peace of mind (בְּשִׂמְחָה)!