

## פסוקי דזמרה Verses of Praise

### 1. *Nishmat, Siddur* (Shabbat morning)

אלו פינו מלא שירה כים. ולשונו רנה כהמון גליו. ושפתותינו שבח כמרחבי רקיע. ועינינו מאירות  
כשמש וכירח. וידינו פרושות כנשרי שמים. ורגלינו קלות כאילות. אין אנהנו מספיקים להודות לך  
ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו. ולברך את שמך על אחת מאלהי אלפי אלפים ורבי רבבות פעמים.  
הטובות שעשית עם אבותינו ועמנו:

If our mouths were as full of song as the sea,  
And our tongue with jubilation as is myriad waves,  
If our lips were full of praise like the spacious heavens,  
And our eyes shone like the sun and moon,  
If our hands were outstretched like eagles of the sky,  
And our feet as swift as hinds –  
Still we could not thank You enough, Lord our God and God of our ancestors,  
Or bless Your name  
For even one of the thousand thousands and myriad myriads of favors  
You did for our ancestors and for us.

### 2. *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 118b*

אמר רבי יוסי: יהא חלקי מגומרי הלל בכל יום... פי קאמרין — בפסוקי דזמרה.

Rabbi Yosei said: May my portion be among those who complete *hallel* every day... When we say this statement of Rabbi Yosei, we are referring to the verses of praise [*pesukei dezimra*].

### 3. R. Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Prayer”

To pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain the sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments. Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living.

### 4. *Siddur Rav Saadia Gaon*

והתנדבה אומתנו לקרוא מזמורים מספר תשבחות הקב"ה ולפניהם ואחריהם שתי  
ברכות. ותיקנה לעשות כך אחרי שהמאמין מברך על כל המקרים הקורים אותו מראשית  
יקיצתו עד זמן התפלה.

Our nation volunteered to read mizmorim (chapters) from the book of praise of the Holy Blessed One (Psalms) – and before and after, two blessings. And it was established to do so because the believer must bless [God] for all the events that occur to him, from the moment he awakes until he begins to pray.

## 5. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 32a

דרש רבי שמלאי: לעולם יסדר אדם שבחו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, ואחר כך יתפלל. מנלן? — ממשה, דכתיב: "וַאֲתַחֲנֶן אֵל ה' בְּעֵת הַהִיא". וכתיב: "ה' אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה הַחֲלֵתָ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת עַבְדְּךָ אֶת גְּדֻלָּה וְאֶת יָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה אֲשֶׁר מִי אֵל בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה כַּמַּעֲשִׂיךָ וְכַגְבוּרוֹתֶיךָ". וכתיב בַּתְּרִיה "אֶעֱבְרָה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה וְגו'".

Rabbi Simlai taught: One should always set forth praise of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and then pray [for his own needs]. From where do we derive this? From Moses, as it is written: "And I beseeched the Lord at that time" (Deuteronomy 3:23). And [immediately afterward in his prayer,] it is written: "Lord, God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand, for what God is there in the heavens or on earth who can perform deeds such as Yours and Your might" (Deuteronomy 3:24), and it is only thereafter that it is written: "Please, let me pass over and see the good land [that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon]" (Deuteronomy 3:25). Only after his praise did Moses make his personal request.]

## 6. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 34a

אמר רב יהודה: לעולם אל ישאל אדם צרכיו לא בשלש ראשונות, ולא בשלש אחרונות, אלא באמצעיות. דאמר רבי חנינא: ראשונות — דומה לעבד שמסדר שבת לפני רבו. אמצעיות — דומה לעבד שמבקש פרס מרבו. אחרונות — דומה לעבד שקבל פרס מרבו, ונפטר והולך לו.

Rav Yehuda said: One must never request his own needs in the first three or in the last three blessings; rather, he should do so in the middle blessings. As Rabbi Hanina said: During the first three blessings, he is like a servant who arranges praise before his master; during the middle blessings, he is like a servant who requests a reward from his master; during the final three blessings, one is like a servant who already received a reward from his master and is taking his leave and departing.

## 7. R. Elisha Friedman, "Pesukei d'Zimra: Preparing Us for Prayer"

The verses recited in Pesukei d'Zimra reinforce an important idea: We are small and God is vast. They provide perspective on our desires. Our needs may seem all-important and the challenges we face overwhelming, but we are not the center of the world...

"You give it open-handedly, feeding every creature to its heart's content," reads a famous passage from the Ashrei prayer, composed mostly of excerpts from [Psalm 145](#). This reminds us that every creature seeks to survive and sustain itself from God's bounty — not just us.

"He is the healer of the broken-hearted," we say. Our problems, large though they may loom, do not last forever.

Later in the service, we come to the Amidah, filled with its series of stirring requests of God. The Amidah prayer seeks to change the world around us — asking for peace, for health, for rain in its time. Our own needs occupy center stage.

Pesukei d'Zimra is different. It seeks not to change the world, but to change us, inviting us to see the world, ourselves, and our needs and wants from the vantage point of the transcendent. Reciting it enables us to pray properly by placing our own needs in the proper context. Only with that perspective are we prepared to beseech God with our many requests.

### 8. Mishna Berachot 5:1 (Berachot 30b)

אין עומדין להתפלל אלא מתוך כבוד ראש.

We rise to pray only from a place of solemnity.

### 9. Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 31a

תנו רבנן: אין עומדין להתפלל לא מתוך עצבות, ולא מתוך עצלות, ולא מתוך שחוק, ולא מתוך שיחה, ולא מתוך קלות ראש, ולא מתוך דברים בטלים, אלא מתוך שמחה של מצוה.

The Sages taught: One may neither stand to pray from an atmosphere of sorrow nor from an atmosphere of laziness, nor from an atmosphere of laughter, nor from an atmosphere of conversation, nor from an atmosphere of frivolity, nor from an atmosphere of purposeless matters. Rather, one should approach prayer from an atmosphere imbued with the joy of a mitzva.

### 10. Tosafot, Berachot 31a

ולכן אין מתפללין מתוך קלות ראש ושחוק, אלא מתוך כבוד ראש ושמחה של מצוה כגון שעסק בדברי תורה. ולכן נהגו לומר פסוקי דזמרה ואשרי קודם תפלה.

Therefore we do not rise to prayer from a place of frivolity and silliness. Rather, [we rise to prayer] from a place of solemnity and the joy of a Mitzvah, like being involved with matters of Torah. And therefore the practice is to recite pesukei d'zimra and Ashrei before the amidah.

### 11. Zohar, 2:202b

ליראה את השם, פקודא דא קיימא באלין תושבחהו דקאמר דוד מלכא... דתמן בעי בר נש לדחלא מקמי מאריה, בגין דאינון שירין קיימין בההוא אתר דאקרי יראה. וכל אינון הללויה, דאינון רזא דיראה דקודשא בריה הוא.

To fear God: This commandment is fulfilled through the recitation of the praises of King David... For in those areas a person must awaken one's self in awe before the Creator. For these songs are grounded in *malchut* (kingship) which is called fear. And all those chapters that have the word Halleluya, which are the secrets of the fear of the Holy Blessed One.

### 12. Psalm 30 (Introductory Psalm to Psukei De-Zimra)

כי רגע באפו חיים ברצונו בערב יליו בכי ולבקר רנה... הפכת מספדי למחול לי פתחת שקי ותאנני שמחה: למען יזמרה כבוד ולא ידם י- וק אלקי לעולם אודך:

For He is angry but a moment,  
and when He is pleased there is life.

One may lie down weeping at nightfall;  
 but at dawn there are shouts of joy...  
 You turned my lament into dancing,  
 you undid my sackcloth and girded me with joy,  
 that [my] whole being might sing hymns to You endlessly;  
 O LORD my God, I will praise You forever.

**13. Psalms 2:11**

עבדו את י-י וק ב'ראה וגילו ברעדה.

Worship God in awe and exult with trembling.

**14. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 30b**

אמר רב אדא בר מתנא אמר רבה במקום גילה שם תהא רעדה.

Rav Ada bar Matna said in the name of Rabba, “In the place of exultation there should be trembling.”

**15. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

			לְכָל־חַפְצֵי תַחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם: {ס}
וְעַתָּה לְעָקוֹר נְטוּעֵ:	וְעַתָּה לְמוֹת	וְעַתָּה לְלֶדֶת	וְעַתָּה לְטָעַת
וְעַתָּה לְבָנוֹת:	וְעַתָּה לְפָרוֹץ	וְעַתָּה לְרִפּוּא	וְעַתָּה לְהַרְוֵג
וְעַתָּה רְקוּד:	וְעַתָּה סָפוּד	וְעַתָּה לְשִׁחּוֹק	וְעַתָּה לְבָכּוֹת
וְעַתָּה לְרִחֹק מִחֻבָּק:	וְעַתָּה לְחֻבּוֹק	וְעַתָּה כְּנוּס אֲבָנִים	וְעַתָּה לְהַשְׁלִיד אֲבָנִים
וְעַתָּה לְהַשְׁלִיד:	וְעַתָּה לְשִׁמּוֹר	וְעַתָּה לְאֲפֹד	וְעַתָּה לְבִקְשׁ
וְעַתָּה לְדַבֵּר:	וְעַתָּה לְחִשּׁוֹת	וְעַתָּה לְתַפּוֹר	וְעַתָּה לְקַרְוֵעַ
וְעַתָּה שְׁלוֹם: {ס}	וְעַתָּה מִלְחָמָה	וְעַתָּה לְשִׂנְאָה	וְעַתָּה לְאַהֲבָה

A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven:  
 A time for being born and a time for dying,  
 A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted;  
 A time for slaying and a time for healing,  
 A time for tearing down and a time for building up;  
 A time for weeping and a time for laughing,  
 A time for wailing and a time for dancing;  
 A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,  
 A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces;  
 A time for seeking and a time for losing,  
 A time for keeping and a time for discarding;  
 A time for ripping and a time for sewing,  
 A time for silence and a time for speaking;  
 A time for loving and a time for hating;  
 A time for war and a time for peace.

**16. Yehuda Amichai, “A Man in His Life”**

אדם בְּחַיָּיו אין לו זמן שְׂיִהְיֶה לו  
 זמן לְכָל.

וְאִין לֹא עֵת שְׁתִּהְיֶה לוֹ עֵת  
לְכָל חַפְצֵי. קִהְלֵת לֹא צָדֵק בְּשֹׁאֲמֵר כָּד.

אָדָם צָרִיד לְשֹׂנְאֵהוּ וְלֹאֲהֵב בְּבֵת אַחַת,  
בְּאוֹתָן עֵינָיִם לְבָכוֹת וּבְאוֹתָן עֵינָיִם לְצַחֵק  
בְּאוֹתָן יָדַיִם לְזָרֵק אֲבָנִים  
וּבְאוֹתָן יָדַיִם לְאַסֹּף אוֹתָן,  
לְעֲשׂוֹת אֲהַבָּה בְּמִלְחָמָה וּמִלְחָמָה בְּאַהֲבָה.

וְלִשְׂנֹא וְלִסְלַח וְלִזְכֹּר וְלִשְׁכַּח  
וְלִסְדֹּר וְלִבְלָבֵל וְלִאֲכַל וְלִעֲפֹל  
אֵת מֶה שֶׁהִיסְטוֹרְיָה אֲרָפָה  
עוֹשֶׂה בְּשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת מְאֹד

אָדָם בְּחַיּוֹ אֵין לוֹ זְמַן.  
כְּשֶׁהוּא מְאָבֵד הוּא מְחַפֵּשׁ  
כְּשֶׁהוּא מוֹצֵא הוּא שׁוֹכַח,  
כְּשֶׁהוּא שׁוֹכַח הוּא אוֹהֵב  
וּכְשֶׁהוּא אוֹהֵב הוּא מִתְחִיל לְשַׁכַּח

A man doesn't have time in his life  
to have time for everything.  
He doesn't have seasons enough to have  
a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes  
Was wrong about that.  
A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment,  
to laugh and cry with the same eyes,  
with the same hands to throw stones and to gather them,  
*to make love in war and war in love.*  
And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,  
to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest  
what history  
takes years and years to do.  
A man doesn't have time.  
When he loses he seeks, when he finds  
he forgets, when he forgets he loves,  
when he loves he begins to forget.

**17. R. Yitzchak Aboab, Menorat ha-Maor (pg. 212, Mosad ha-Rav Kook ed.)**

מצאתי כתוב כי לכן נקראו השירים מזמורים מלשון לא תזמר (ויקרא כה:ד) ולפי זה  
זמירות רוצה לומר זמורות שכשם שהמזמר בגפנים יקוץ כל הזמורות ויניח מה שראוי  
לרטב כך הזמירות שאנו אומרים קודם התפלה יסירו ויקוצו כל המכשולות והעונות שיש  
לנו לפני השם וכשתבוא תפלתנו שתהיה נשמעת ורצויה לפני השם .

I found it written that the songs [of the Psalms] are called mizmorim based on the language of  
the Biblical verse You shall not prune (Lo Tizmor, [Vayikra 25:4](#), referring to the prohibitions of

the Shemita year). And according to this, the word *zemirot* refers to *z'morot* (prunings). For just like one who prunes vines has to trim all the branches (*z'morot*) and leave behind that which should become wet. So too, the *zemirot* that we recite before *tefila* are meant to remove and cut off all the stumbling blocks and sins that stand in the way of God. So that when our prayers reach God, they will be heard and desired by God.

**18. R. Jeff Fox, Introduction to Pesukei d'Zimra (8) – Sha'arei Orah & Menorat ha-Maor**

<https://roshyeshivatmaharat.org/2020/08/introduction-to-pesukei-dzimra-8-shaarei-ora-h-menorat-ha-maor/>

One of the greatest challenges to prayer today is our inability to truly focus on one task at a time (*kavana*). Even as I am writing this essay, I have ten other tabs open on my computer. Pruning away extraneous thoughts, ideas, and tabs is not simple. For these mystics *pesukei d'zimra* offers us a few moments of pruning every single day.

Learning to be in the moment and not pulled by our phones, our email or our next appointment is a life-long goal. This is true for counselors, teachers, parents and Rebbeim. We all know what it is like to truly listened to. To have someone give you their complete attention even if for only a few minutes. Practicing that skill with God helps us to be better listeners for our own friends, students and children. Developing the ability to be truly present for another does not happen on its own, it requires time and training. For the *Sha'arie Orah* and *Menorat ha-Maor*, *pesukei d'zimra* is a daily practice that helps cultivate this essential spiritual life-skill.