THE LITURGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF PSALMS IN JUDAISM: Demonstrated with Samples from Psalms 90–106, with a Special Focus on Psalm 92, Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat

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THE LITURGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF PSALMS IN JUDAISM

Demonstrated with Samples from Psalms 90–106, with a Special Focus on Psalm 92, *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat*

*Annette M. Boeckler**

Abstract

The usage of a text within liturgy adds new meanings to the text. This article gives an overview of the understandings of Psalm 92 within its Jewish liturgical usages. The understanding is influenced by the general attitude towards psalms in Jewish liturgy, by popular interpretations in the Midrash (Jewish legends), by Kabbalistic views and by its meaning within halakhah (religious law), but also by the music that is commonly attributed to it within the service. The article shows how a text that originally had no relationship with Shabbat became, thanks to its headline, an important study text about the essence of Shabbat.

Introductory Remarks

Fifteen of the seventeen psalms of the fourth book of Psalms (Pss. 90–106) have core functions in the Jewish liturgy.[1] At least eleven of them may even be recited daily or at least weekly, something quite extraordinary within Judaism.

The Jewish prayer book, though it is the most read book in Judaism, is the least commentated upon. Liturgical understanding in a Jewish service is like appreciating art: it is poetic, not scholarly or academic, and thus usually not rationally reflected upon. It is nourished by spontaneous associations based on the present situation, our experiences and pre-knowledge. Additionally, once a text features in the liturgy, its liturgical context adds new interpretations. In this article, an example is given of how a biblical text acquires new meanings by its liturgical usage. After a general overview on the usage of psalms in the liturgy, the liturgical understanding of probably the best-known psalm in the prayer book – *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat*, Psalm 92 – will be presented

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in more detail. By liturgical interpretation, I mean that a specific liturgical context – not the biblical literary context – will provide the framework of understanding here. A liturgical context is created by: the psalm's place within the prayer book – that is, a regular use of a text in a fixed specific place within a set liturgy; certain traditional understandings, especially Midrashim, that partly have been the reason for a specific liturgical usage, and partly have been inspired by it; the preconceptions about the text that someone has when reciting this piece of liturgy; and the performance of the text, which creates emotional understanding.

Specifically two sections of the Jewish service are important in regard to the fourth book of Psalms: one is called 'Verses of Song' (in Aramaic: *Pesukei deZimra*); it opens every Jewish morning service. The other is called 'Reception of Shabbat' (in Hebrew: *Kabbalat Shabbat*), the opening of the Friday evening service. Five of the psalms (90, 91, 92, 93 and 100) are regularly used within the 'Verses of Song' section (Pesukei deZimra); five (95, 96, 97, 98 and 99) are used in the Kabbalat Shabbat section; two (92 and 93) regularly follow Kabbalat Shabbat as introduction of the evening prayer on Friday; some are the psalms for special days (92 Shabbat, 93 Friday, 94 Wednesday, 103 Yom Kippur, 104 New Moon); and some are very often used on specific occasions (90 and 91 for a funeral, *Yizkor*). Psalms 105 and 106 do not appear themselves in the liturgy but verses from them are quoted in 1 Chronicles 16:8–36[2] that is part of Pesukei deZimra (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Overview of the Liturgical Usage of the Fourth Book of Psalms in Judaism*[3] (in grey: larger, liturgically fixed units)

Pesukei DeZimra (every[4] morning)	**Kabbalat Shabbat** (every[5] Friday evening)	**Other Liturgical Usages**
		Ps. 90 is often used in a shivah[6] service.
Ps. 90 (*Tefillah leMoshe ish haElohim*) on Shabbat **Ps. 91** (*Yoshev beseiter Elyon*) on Shabbat		
		Ps. 91 is often used in a **funeral** service.
Ps. 92 (*Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat*) on Shabbat		**Ps. 92** opens the evening prayer on Erev Shabbat after the Kabbalat Shabbat section.
Ps. 93 (*Adonai malach ge'ut lavesh*) on Shabbat		**Ps. 93** follows Ps. 92 on Erev Shabbat.
		Ps. 93 Psalm for Friday

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Table 1: Continued

Pesukei DeZimra (every[4] morning)	**Kabbalat Shabbat** (every[5] Friday evening)	**Other Liturgical Usages**
		Ps. 94 (*El neqamot Adonai*) Psalm for Wednesday, added usually at the end of the morning service
	Ps. 95 (*Lechu nerannah ladonai*) **Ps. 96** (*Shiru ladonai shir chadash*) **Ps. 97** (*Adonai malach tagel ha'aretz*) **Ps. 98** (*Mizmor shiru ladonai shir chadash*) **Ps. 99** (*Adonai malach yirgezu amim*)	According to an ancient Palestinian tradition (today only known academically) **Ps. 99** was the Psalm for Tisha beAv.
Ps. 100 (*Mizmor letodah*) on weekdays		
–	–	–
		Ps. 102:28 (*Veatah huh ushenoteicha lo yitamu*) is used in the Yom Kippur liturgy. **Ps. 103** (*LeDavid Barchi nafshi et adonai*) is used at Yom Kippur; **vv. 15–17** (*Enosh kechatzir yamav*) are part of the Yizkor (memorial service) in some congregations, and may be used in a funeral service. **Ps. 104** (*Barchi nafshi et adonai, adonai elohai gadalta meod*), psalm for Rosh Chodesh, the New Moon, may be added at the end of the service.
1 Chron. 16:8–36, daily, always the first text in Pesukei deZimra, quotes freely **Ps. 105** (*Hodu ladonai qir'u bishmo*), verses of **Ps. 96** and **Ps. 106:47–48** (= end of Book Four), leading into a non-biblical florilegium that quotes **Pss. 99:5.9** and **94:1–2**.		

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The extensive and prominent liturgical usage of the psalms in the fourth book of Psalms is partly due to the fact that according to a well-known tradition not only the first one, Psalm 90, was written by Moses[7] as it explicitly states in the heading (תפלה למשה איש האלהים *Tefillah leMoshe ish haElohim*), but also the ten succeeding psalms, which do not mention any (other) author. Legendary tradition has it that David only rediscovered these psalms and incorporated them into his book.[8] Pss. 90–100 are thus thought to be composed by the same Moses who according to tradition transmitted the Torah.[9] This gives these psalms a special authority, but it does not indicate that their liturgical usage in Judaism is old. That psalms in general are used at all in the prayer book is rather surprising.

Psalm Usage in Liturgy and the Liturgical Place of Psalm 92

In rabbinic Judaism psalms were not regarded as 'prayers'. They were seen as prophetic texts – material to study and thus to be 'said', not to be 'prayed'. They certainly were used in Temple times. The Mishnah (about 200 CE) remembers that the Levites sang a special psalm each day[10] (the psalms in question were Pss. 24, 48, 82, 94, 81, 93 and 92; three of them stem from the fourth book of Psalms), but in the Masoretic text only Ps. 92 mentions its day (*Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat*); the others do not (although the Septuagint tradition is different).[11]

The Mishnah further reminds us of the custom that the pious of the past used to spend at least one hour preparing themselves for prayer (mBer. 5:1) and the Talmud mentions Rabbi Yosei's strange, isolated wish to recite Hallel daily (bShab. 118b).[12] In fact, only forms of Hallel[13] that were thought to have been chanted at the crossing of the Red Sea, and thus first and foremost not related to the Temple, were used liturgically in rabbinic times. Psalms played a role, but it was in preaching (Midrash). Liturgically, only individual biblical verses, segments of verses or paraphrases could provide the wording for the new non-biblical prayers, but the rabbinic idea of liturgy is non-biblical.[14] The rabbis consciously did not continue the Temple liturgy. Things that had happened in the Temple belonged *there* and were not to be repeated elsewhere (such as instrumental music or imitations of Temple objects, etc.). Therefore, psalms did not form the liturgy in rabbinic times after the Temple was destroyed.

There was a tradition in Eretz Israel that some psalms belonged to special days, and teach something about these days. Psalm 103, for example, was a text for Yom Kippur and in modern Progressive Judaism regained this place; Ps. 29 is used for Shavuot, Ps. 22 for Purim and Ps. 99 for Tisha beAv, to mention a few, which some Midrashim explain consequently with this

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assignment in mind. Psalm 93 became a psalm to be said at the beginning of a festival. When Shabbat fell on a festival, Ps. 92 was recited beforehand. It is assumed that the tradition of using Ps. 92 on Friday evenings started in Eretz Israel during the fifth century CE.[15]

The situation in Babylonia in post-Talmudic times was different.[16] An influential group of people called Karaites (eighth and ninth centuries CE) rejected the rabbinic tradition of oral Torah and only accepted biblical traditions (Mikra, therefore 'Karaites'). For these Karaites, psalms were the ideal form of prayer;[17] the Karaite liturgy was biblical. Rav Saadya Gaon, in the ninth century, defending Rabbinic Judaism, explains about the psalms – certainly having the Karaite 'abuse' in mind – that one should not think that expressions in the psalms such as 'have mercy upon me' or 'save me' were the words of a person addressing God, because the Book of Psalms contains prophecies, not prayers. Saadya says:

> We must realize that all of these are from the Eternal One, who expressed them in these forms of speech employed by His creatures . . . [. We must] convert the speech of the prophet in this book, [such as] 'Have mercy upon me'[,] to the speech of the Eternal One – 'I will have mercy upon my servant' – and from 'heed my prayer' to 'I will heed your prayer', and from 'deliver me and save me' to 'I will deliver him and save him', and similarly in this book. All is the word of the Eternal One and nothing is human discourse.[18]

The psalms are seen as prophecies, to be read as study texts.

As preparation for the morning service, however, people used study texts. The first prayer book by Rav Amram Gaon (ninth century CE) quotes the list of the beginnings of the seven daily psalms from the Mishnah as a study text.[19] The first prayer book also has the recital of Psalms 145–150 before prayer, as a Rabbinic statement says: 'Whoever recites *Ashrei* [a framed version of Ps. 145] three times a day is assured of his share in the world to come' (Ber. 4b) – now this opens the recital of the last six psalms as the Daily Hallel (Pss. 145–150), and becomes the core of Pesukei deZimra.[20] To open this section, not a psalm but the recital of 1 Chronicles 16:8–36 was chosen some time later; it is a florilegium that quotes mainly from Psalms 105 and 96. In medieval times, long after the Geonic debates against the Karaites were forgotten, further psalms were added. On Shabbat, the four Psalms 19, 34, 90 and 91 and the three Psalms 33, 92 and 93 were said to frame the so-called 'Great Hallel' (Psalms 135 and 136), thought to have been chanted when crossing the Red Sea. This whole block is added before the Daily Hallel (Ps. 145–150) in a traditional Shabbat morning service as a teaching about the Exodus, creation and the world to come and to prepare fittingly for the Shabbat prayer.

Psalm 92 – the psalm I would like now to focus on – was included because of its headline: a song in some relation with Shabbat, and because of

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its rabbinic interpretation. Since psalms are prophecies – as Saadya claimed – *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat* contains a prophecy about Shabbat. But a South African rabbi of the last century once truly remarked in a sermon: *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat* 'reminds one of the sensational headlines of the yellow press, when one reads the paragraph underneath the headline and finds that it does not give the news which that headline purports to convey'.[21]

Psalm 92 in the Rabbinic Tradition

The commentator Rashi (1040–1105)[22] explains, based on a teaching in the Talmud (bR.H. 31a) (quoted from Mikraot Gedolot haKeter):

> *Psalm. Song* for the day. *For the day of Shabbat*: that they [the Levites] sang on Shabbatot. And it deals with the subject of the World to Come which is wholly Shabbat.

Psalm 92, which is about the fate of the wicked and the righteous, is thus a prophecy about the world to come where the wicked, now blooming like grass, will be destroyed, and the righteous will flourish like a palm tree. Therefore Psalm 92 is very fittingly about Shabbat, just not this one that we celebrate, but the World to Come, when all evil will be put to rest (להשבית *lehashbit*).[23]

Rashi does not mention the broadly assumed Mosaic authorship of this psalm here because he has done this earlier on Ps. 90:1.[24] The Targum,[25] however, translates the beginning of this psalm surprisingly:

> שבחא ושירא דאמר אדם קדמאי על יומא דשבתא
>
> Praise and song that the first human being said about the Sabbath day.

So is it Adam's psalm (or Eve's)? Midrash Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer explains: 'R. Shimon said: The first man said this psalm, but it was forgotten throughout all the generations till Moses came and renewed it in his own name' (Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 18). For a liturgical understanding it makes a difference whether this text is a prophecy by Moses about the future, to give hope, or if these are among the first words of the first human being, thus the primordial song of humanity with which, since then, we all may join in.

The Midrash (e.g., Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 92:1)[26] explains:

> When Adam sinned against the command of the Holy One, blessed be He, God sat in judgement upon him to punish him. [The Torah says: When you eat from this fruit, you will die; Gen. 2:17.] But what was the outcome? [As we know, Adam surprisingly did not die.] You find that Adam was created on the eve of Shabbat: In the first hour, he came into

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> being as a thought; in the second hour, God consulted the ministering angels;[27] in the third, God gathered the dust; in the fourth, God kneaded the dust; in the fifth, God made the form; in the sixth, God joined the parts; in the seventh, God blew breath into him; in the eighth, God stood him on his feet; in the ninth, God enjoined him; in the tenth, he sinned; in the eleventh, he was brought to judgement; in the twelfth, he was driven out – driven out because when God was about to decree his destruction, the Shabbat arrived and brought his expulsion instead. . . . When Adam saw the power of the Shabbat [that he was kept alive], he was about to sing a hymn in her honour. But the Shabbat said to Adam: 'Do you sing a hymn to me? Let us, I and you, sing a hymn to the Holy One, blessed be He.' Hence it is said: It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.[28]

The Midrash plays with the fact that a hymn about Shabbat does not mention Shabbat at all, but also with the fact that the Hebrew root, ידה *y-d-h*, of *lehodot* also is the root of the noun *vidui*, confession – not always but mostly understood as confession of sins. The Targum even knows the tradition that Adam's song is one of ten songs of redemption: 'Ten songs were recited in this world. The first song was recited by Adam when his sin was forgiven him and the Shabbat day came and protected him. He opened his mouth and said: A psalm, a song for the Shabbat day' (Ps. 92:1). The second song was recited by Moses and the children of Israel at the sea (*Shirat haYam*, Exod. 15), the next songs were Num. 21:17 (song of the well), Deut. 32 (*Ha'azinu*, Moses' song), Josh. 10:12, Judg. 5, 1 Sam. 2 and 2 Sam. 22. The last song in this world is *Shir haShirim* by Solomon and the tenth will be recited in messianic times (Isa. 30:29).[29] In the Sephardic tradition *Shir haShirim* is in fact studied on Friday afternoon just before welcoming the Shabbat.

Psalm 92 understood this way thus depicts Shabbat as a celebration of forgiveness and renewal, a situation experienced in the past and the reason why we are alive today. It is the song of hope for humanity.

Psalm 92 and Kabbalat Shabbat

In the Ashkenazi traditional liturgy today Psalm 92 together with 93 appears as the seventh psalm recited before the beginning of the evening prayer (Barechu etc.), together with two liturgical poems. Today's traditional introduction to the Shabbat evening service in the Ashkenazi tradition (Kabbalat Shabbat)[30] consists of:

(1) Psalms 95–99 and 29;
(2) the seven lines of the poem *Ana beKoach*;
(3) the hymn *Lekha Dodi* with nine strophes and refrain;

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(4) and as the seventh Psalm: Psalms 92 and 93, regarded as a unit, with Ps. 93 depicting the future world as a continuation of Ps. 92.

Psalms 95–99 are the kingship psalms from the fourth book of Psalms; Ps. 29 is understood as praising the ten voices of creation and revelation; and the hymn *Lekha Dodi* ('Come, my Beloved') ends with the words: 'Enter, O bride, enter, O bride!', the bride being a metaphor for Shabbat, seen as a royal bride[31] coming to her bridegroom – which is either *Tiferet* (splendour), God or Israel. (The meaning changes during *Lekha Dodi*.)

The rabbis in the Talmud would change into their finest garments before Shabbat began and welcome Shabbat *as if* she were a queen (bShab. 119a). The Kabbalist mystics in Sefat took this literally, and elaborated and dramatized the idea. But the mystics in Sefat were not a unified body: they had different traditions. Rabbi Moshe Cordovero received Queen Shabbat by reciting the five kingship psalms, Pss. 95–99, because the experience of God's power (kingship, *malkhut*) was understood as the lowest of ten divine emanations experienced in this world (the Kabbalists called them *sefirot*). The hymn *Lekha Dodi*, composed by Cordovero's teacher Shelomo Alkabez, unifies in its nine strophes nine *sefirot* by mentioning specific words and verses describing power, foundation, majesty, endurance, beauty, justice, loving kindness, understanding and wisdom. The refrain corresponds to the highest of the ten *sefirot*, *keter* (crown). In today's liturgy, this mystical hymn is the immediate liturgical context before Psalm 92. (Incidentally, it was sung in the synagogue, *not* in some fields.)

Rabbi Isaac Luria, for whom the process of creation and redemption and the idea of a divine spark in everything were important, went out into the fields to watch the sun setting and Shabbat arriving in nature, then recited Psalm 29 in the synagogue, a psalm that mentions ten voices (*qolot*), symbolizing the ten words of creation. Shabbat is the day when unity prevails over fragmentation. At some point the two traditions were mixed and Ps. 29 was added to the kingship psalms, so that a unit of six psalms was then recited, one psalm to repair the lack of spiritual awareness during each day of the week.[32] The hymn *Lekha Dodi*, framed by psalms, is the bridge between profane and holy, between fragmentation and unity, so that Psalm 92, now the seventh psalm, is truly Shabbat as God's mystical presence.

Nineteenth-century German Liberal Judaism would reorganize this part, rejecting the Ashkenazi Kabbalat Shabbat as young, mystical and with repetitive content, and add instead a modern prayer by the rabbi to set the mood for Shabbat. Thus congregations following the German Liberal tradition usually recite only Psalm 95 (*Lechu nerannah ladonai*) and sometimes Psalm 29 before *Lekha Dodi*. But then comes an elaborate, majestic version of Psalm 92. Modern Progressive congregations again feel creative about how

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to prepare for Shabbat. They could pick up a modern Israeli custom of singing modern Israeli songs and tunes before *Lekha Dodi*.

With the exception of festival evening services, where *Lekha Dodi* is not sung, the immediate textual content for Psalm 92 is thus almost always the hymn *Lekha Dodi* describing a royal reception of Shabbat as a queen. Though the strophes of the hymn originally have a hidden Kabbalistic meaning, creating with chosen words and verses the unification of God's ten mystical emanations, the words of the verses talk literally about the messianic times, hope for the people and the land of Israel and redemption. Usually people stand for the last verse to greet Shabbat and then sit again for Psalm 92, *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat*.

Psalm 92 and Halakhah

A halakhic source from the nineteenth century defines the recital of Ps. 92 as the official beginning of Shabbat.[33] Even though it may not yet be dark, Shabbat can begin earlier, as Shabbat can be prolonged at its beginning and end – the Kabbalists had already made use of this idea. Therefore mourners enter the service just before Ps. 92. The liturgical beginning of Shabbat is marked here. *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat: Tov lehodot*. . . will thus be the first words that mourners will hear in the synagogue. This situation adds a new layer of meaning to the psalm in the given moment as words marking the end of mourning. The descriptions of the future true Shabbat where all evil will be vindicated now serve as words of comfort after somebody has died.

Psalm 92 Liturgically Performed

A traditional synagogue may use musical instruments for Kabbalat Shabbat but will not use them for Psalm 92 and everything that follows, as this psalm marks the beginning of Shabbat and instruments are not used on Shabbat in Orthodoxy and in many Conservative or Masorti synagogues. In some congregations, Psalm 92 may therefore be experienced clearly as a marker of a difference: it is the first prayer suddenly chanted a cappella in the Friday night service. But in most traditional synagogues no instruments would be used anyway, and in Progressive congregations they can be used throughout the whole service (classically the organ, today all kinds of instruments), but Psalm 92 may still mark a difference by the choice of a melody of a different character or the performance style. In the eastern European cantorial tradition the *nusach* suddenly changes at *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat* from the

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majestic Adonai Malach mode to Magen Avot mode, a mode reminiscent of the minor scale in European classical music, which marks festive moments and is for example also used for Kiddush (the blessing of wine on Friday evening). This style of reciting Ps. 92 may sound careful and fragile – an expression of sensitive hope. The western tradition, however, keeps Adonai Malach mode for Psalms 92–93 and only changes for Barechu. Adonai Malach mode is reminiscent of the major scale in European music. The majestic atmosphere of the God-is-King psalms is taken over into *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat*. A well-known version from the western tradition is a composition by Louis Lewandowski (1821–1894) where Ps. 92 is chanted as a majestic dialogue between cantor and choir with organ, celebrating the royal entrance of a queen. But in Ashkenazi traditional synagogues the psalm is often not chanted aloud: only beginning and end are to be heard to mark the moment of the service and each congregant says the psalm in silence. In the Progressive tradition, Ps. 92 is usually used to continue the togetherness in song created with the hymn *Lekha Dodi*. Some congregations use the headline of this psalm (*Mizmor shir*. . . or *Tov lehodot*) or one verse (for example, *Mah gadlu*. . .) as a congregational singalong. Usually the composed melodies used are based on the *nusach* of the eastern European tradition as this is the common tradition in the USA and Israel. Some tunes are not based on traditional musical conventions at all. This style of performance stresses the communal aspect of Shabbat as a day of celebration. Psalm 92 may also just be read, in Hebrew or in the vernacular or in a mixture of both, either responsively between reader and congregation or by either the reader or the congregation together.

In short, Psalm 92 may be used as a whole or in parts, aloud with fancy tunes or traditional *nusach*, said, mumbled or in silence – this is the decision of the leader of prayer in the given moment or a preparation team, based on the local traditions of the specific community. When experienced in the service, Ps. 92 thus presents Shabbat majestic, meditative, silent or celebrative as a community united in song. With the exception of the traditional Magen Avot mode, whose atmosphere could illuminate hope into the future, the performances are usually expressions of the present experience of Shabbat.

Psalm 92 Homiletically

In a sermon in the 1950s – it was part of a sermon series on the Friday evening liturgy that ran over a year – the South African Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz explained the meaning of Ps. 92 for his congregation as follows:

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> It is called a Sabbath Psalm not because it sings of the Sabbath and extols its virtues, but because it represents the kind of thoughts which are liable to enter and possess the thoughts of that person who observes the Sabbath in its true spirit. . . . Just as of the enslaved children of Israel in Egypt, it is recorded that they rejected the vision of the redemption 'from the shortness of spirit which comes from hard labour,' so to-day, even though it be not 'hard labour,' it takes man away from the contemplation of things of the spirit. He sees only that which is before his eyes. He has not the time, and if he had the time he has not the inclination, for contemplation of things *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the aspect of eternity. It is only when the Sabbath comes, and he is relieved of material cares, when he makes of the day a day of recreation that in the serenity and tranquil peace of that blessed day he can give himself over to meditation and contemplation. It is then that he can sing of the greatness of God and of the ultimate triumph of right and justice. It is then that he can declare that the Lord is upright, that there is no iniquity in him. He can attune himself to the spirit of God and enter into communion with him, and spiritually refreshed and strengthened in his faith, face the future with confidence and trust. Therein much more than in the enforced abstention from work lies the true value of the Sabbath of the Lord.[34]

Does the study of prayer enhance the experience of prayer? Or is the mantra of the words the most important experience? Can we learn something from *Mizmor shir leYom haShabbat* about Shabbat or about our lives? Or do we want to meet others, united in song and celebration – where any text could be used as long as it fits our emotions?

Notes

1. This article is based on a lecture given at the Forty-Sixth Annual International Jewish–Christian Bible Week, August 2014, on Book Four of the Psalms.
2. 1 Chron. 16:8–22 = Ps. 105:1–15; 1 Chron. 16:23–33 = Ps. 96:1–13 with slight variations; 1 Chron. 16:34–36 = Ps. 106:47–48, the end of the fourth book of Psalms.
3. It should be noted that there is not just one single liturgical tradition but that various Jewish denominations differ, so this overview is simplified and individual congregations may have other customs. The psalms that appear together in one field are regarded as liturgical units – the chapter division is not relevant in the prayer book.
4. In the Orthodox liturgy.
5. In the Orthodox liturgy.
6. 'Shivah' means the daily services at a mourner's home during the seven days after the burial.
7. 'A prayer of Moses – eleven psalms, from here until "A Psalm of David" [Ps. 101], Moses had said them all; corresponding to them he uttered eleven blessings for eleven tribes in (the passage beginning with): "And in this the blessing" (Deut. 33)'. (Rashi on Ps. 90:1, based on Talmud Baba Batra 14b, Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 22:13. Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 90:3.)

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8. See, e.g., the commentator David Kimhi on Ps. 90:1.
9. On the various authors of Psalms see Talmud Baba Batra 14b–15a; Midrash Tehillim 1:6; Midrash Shir haShirim Rabbah 4:4; and Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:19.
10. Mishnah Tamid 7:4. Cf. Talmud Rosh Hashanah 31a, Soferim 18:1.
11. There is a scholarly debate about the age of the Septuagint headlines with no convincing arguments as to why they were left out by the Masoretes; it is more likely that the Masoretic text preserves an older tradition and the Septuagint's headlines are younger.
12. 'Rabbi Yosei said: May my portion be among those who eat three meals on Shabbat. Rabbi Yosei said: May my portion be among those who complete Hallel every day' (bShab. 118b).
13. This refers to the 'Egyptian Hallel' (the six psalms 113–118) and the 'Great Hallel' (Pss. 135–136), both texts that are believed to have been chanted at the crossing of the sea (and thus do not belong to the Temple). See Talmud Pesachim 118a.
14. S. Nash, 'The Role of Biblical Verses in Prayer According to the Rabbinic Tradition' in *Prayers that Cite Scripture*, ed. J.L. Kugel, Cambridge, MA 2006, pp. 43–59; J.H. Newman, 'The Scripturalization of Prayer in Exilic and Second Temple Judaism' in Kugel, *Prayers that Cite Scripture*, pp. 7–24.
15. L.A. Hoffman, 'Introduction to the Liturgy of Kabbalat Shabbat: Politics, Piety, and Poetry' in *Kabbalat Shabbat* (My People's Prayerbook 8), Woodstock, VT 2005, p. 13, who bases his remarks on research by the Israeli liturgical scholar Ezra Fleischer.
16. R. Brody, 'Liturgical Uses of the Book of Psalms in the Geonic Period' in Kugel, *Prayers that Cite Scripture*, pp. 61–81.
17. J. Mann, 'Anan's Liturgy and His Half-Yearly Cycle of the Reading of the Law', *Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy* 1, 1919, p. 339.
18. Y. Qafih, ed., *Tehillim 'im Targum u-Perush ha-Gaon Rabbenu Se'adyah ben Yosef Fayyumi*, Jerusalem 1966, p. 53; quoted in Brody, 'Liturgical Uses of the Book of Psalms', p. 72.
19. D. Goldschmidt, ed., *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, Jerusalem 1971, p. 40. As the manuscript of this text was often copied and usually adapted to local minhagim, it is often not clear how original the texts are. The manuscripts of the extant text stem from between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries CE.
20. It is framed by the blessings *Barukh she-amar* and *Yishtabach*, the blessings before and after this study of verses of psalms.
21. L.I. Rabinowitz, *Sabbath Light: Sermons on the Sabbath Evening Service*, Johannesburg 1958, p. 75.
22. 'Rashi' is Rabbi Shelomo ben Yitzchak, a biblical and Talmudic commentator and halakhist, who studied in Mainz (and briefly in Worms) and lived in northern France.
23. On this meaning of the root שבת *sh-b-t* see Midrash Sifra, Bechukotai 26:8.
24. There he also attributes each psalm to one of eleven tribes of Israel (Shimon is left out) according to the eleven blessings of Moses in the Torah (Deut. 33). Psalm 92 is attributed to Yehuda, because of the words *tov lehodot*; cf. Gen. 29:35.
25. The date of the Targum on Psalms is debated. D.M. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms* (The Aramaic Bible 16), Collegeville, MN 2004 assumes the sixth century CE but admits that this is guesswork.
26. Other versions of this Midrash can be found in Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 18.20, Shabbat 118a. David Kimhi and Menachem HaMeiri quote this Midrash, abridged, in their commentaries on Ps. 92:1.
27. This debate in the Midrash is inspired by the plural form of 'Let *us* make man' in Gen. 1:27.

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28. Because of the fact that Kimhi quoted this Midrash in his commentary, it became the most famous, but according to another Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 22:13) Adam recited this psalm a bit later, after Cain had killed Abel: Adam asked Cain how he had been punished, and when Cain said that he had repented and God had forgiven, Adam was struck by the power of repentance and recited this psalm as a part of his own return to God.
29. Targum Shir haShirim 1:1.
30. In the Sephardic tradition, usually Psalm 29 (after the study of *Shir haShirim*) and *Lekha Dodi* are the immediate context before Psalms 92–93.
31. This idea is based on Shabbat 119a.
32. By this the additional soul for Shabbat is created. The Kabbalists liked gematria: the numerical values of the first letters of each of these psalms add up to 430, which is the same numerical value as the Hebrew letters of the word נפש, *nefesh* ('soul') and the total number of words in these six psalms is 702, the numerical value of שבת, *Shabbat*. The psalms contain 65 verses, which is the numerical value of אדני, *adonai* ('my Lord'), which is used to replace the name of God.
33. Mishnah Berurah 173:31; 260:3; 263:10 et al.
34. Rabinowitz, *Sabbath Light*, pp. 77–78.

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