Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

The word lekh (אַל־לָּקֹחַ) can literally mean to walk, which in this context could mean urging people to walk to the Temple (Ibn Ezra). Or, rather than a call to physical movement, it could be an expression of encouragement to the reader (Radak) to participate spiritually. Alternatively, it could be a call to believe in God and His providence (Meiri). Or, finally, it could be a combination of all of these: to join physically, spiritually, theologically in the community of celebration that is Shabbat. Allow yourself to relax and join in with those around you.

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD all the earth.

Sing! Sing! Sing! That is the message of the first verses of this psalm. Sometimes we sing because we are happy; at other times we are happy because we sing.

Render to the LORD, O families of the peoples; render to the LORD glory and might.

The threefold invitation to “sing… sing… sing” at the beginning of the psalm is paralleled by the threefold call to the nations of the world to “render to Hashem,” to come together in unity to recognize that there is but one God, a belief that is one of Judaism’s most significant contributions to civilization. One of the byproducts of being filled with happiness is the desire to share it with others. We do so not by trying to impose our will but by sharing our joy. We can share that joy by being joyful. We can also become joyful by allowing ourselves to be drawn in by the joy of others.

Look around you. Whom can you influence? Who can be made joyful by you? Who can help you be more joyful?
Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

All who worship images and boast in idols are put to shame.

Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for He protects the lives of his devoted ones, delivering them from the hand of the wicked.

All who worship images and boast in idols are put to shame. Bow down to Him, all you heavenly powers.

Let those who love Hashem hate evil, and ask him what he saw. “I see people of all kinds, walking past the building,” he replied. “And now,” said the grandfather, “look into this mirror and tell me what you see.” The boy was perplexed but did as he was told and responded, “Well, I see myself.” “Now you will understand,” said the grandfather. “For, in truth, the window pane and the mirror are both made of glass, the only difference being that one of them is covered in silver. But that is the impact of silver, that it has a tendency to make people lose sight of others, and only see themselves.”

Shabbat in general, and prayer in particular, are an opportunity to look beyond the self and ask oneself what one sees.

In Jewish life, a major aspect of loving God is the desire to be like God, to imitate His ways, just as a young child wants to be like his parents out of a deep abiding connection with them. The commandment to be like Him is not translated into abstract theological concepts but into concrete practical ones.

To love Hashem means to be sensitive to one another’s needs. How can you imitate God this Shabbat?
A Psalm. Sing a new song to the LORD

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth;
burst into song, sing with joy, play music.

Great is the LORD in Zion,
He is exalted over all the peoples.

The King in His might loves justice.
You have established equity.
The justice and righteousness in Jacob is Your doing.

Psalm 99. The psalm may be divided into three sections. He is the God of all of the nations. He represents justice and righteousness. He answers all who are close to Him. Each section contains the word "exalted" (ram/romemu). Each contains some reference to the Temple. And each speaks about His holiness. For holiness and exaltedness can mean set apart, seemingly distant and remote from the everyday.

Nevertheless, the theme is exactly the opposite.

How do you use your power with your friends, your family, your employees?

You have established equity. A person sees his enemy's donkey suffering under a burden. He goes to help him in keeping with the biblical commandment (Shemot 23:5): "And if you see your enemy's donkey crouching under his burden...you shall surely help him." His enemy is overwhelmed by the gesture and they become steadfast friends (Midrash Shoter Tov 995). The word equity can also be understood as yashrut, doing the right thing. Following the laws of the Torah leads to doing the right thing, even if it may go against our natural inclination, and peace is the inevitable result.

What acts of justice could I have done this week?

The word showed is meant to burst or to crack open. Sometimes one must crack open one's heart to sing. It does not come so easily to everyone or when one is not necessarily in the mood. The siddur encourages us to open ourselves up, to crack our outer layer like the earth's crust so that our inner voice may be heard.

Suck a deep breath. Give your soul permission to be heard.

We have seen this expression already in Psalm 96. Each fresh insight into life dictates the need for a new song, sometimes for others, sometimes for ourselves. The siddur wants us to take nothing for granted. And even if the words of this new song become familiar and worn, we ourselves change, our realizations grow with each passing minute and week. Our song is new because we are different today than we were yesterday and, hopefully, we are also renewed.

Shake off the old you for a moment or two and feel new again.
The justice and righteousness in Jacob is Your doing. Morality has always been at the center of the Jewish mission to be a light unto the nations. Despite our belief that our system of laws is the most far-reaching and the most ethical, we know that does not make us better than other peoples; it simply gives us more responsibility.

What can I do next week to better live up to that responsibility?

How can I start today?

шеמה

The Ba’al Shem Tov said that no two people have the same abilities. Each person must worship Hashem using his own strengths. If he tries to imitate another person he will not only lose out on his own merit but will not be able to accomplish anything using someone else’s talents.

What are your strengths that you can utilize to worship Hashem?

What can you do to better hear those voices?

What can I do next week to better live up to that responsibility?

How can I start today?

The LORD’s voice echoes over the waters;
the God of glory thunders;
the LORD is over the mighty waters.
The LORD’s voice in power,
the LORD’s voice in beauty,
the LORD’s voice breaks cedars,
the LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon.

The LORD will give strength to His people;
the LORD will bless His people with peace.

This psalm breaks the sequence of the preceding Psalms 95–99. Various reasons have been given as to why this particular one was chosen. At its core, it seems to emphasize the presence of Hashem in all of His majesty and power. Too overwhelming to be experienced firsthand, His presence is symbolized by the many references to His voice, both thunderous and beautiful. The word voice (kol) appears seven times, which the Talmud (Berakhot 29a) says is reminiscent of the seven blessings of the Amida prayer we are yet to say where we rendezvous with God most personally. Others note that it has no fewer than eighteen references to God’s name, an allusion to the eighteen blessings we say in the weekday Amida (Berakhot 28b) and, indeed, the midrash goes to great lengths to show how each line corresponds to each one of those blessings (Shocher Tov).

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What are your strengths that you can utilize to worship Hashem?

The LORD will bless His people with peace. It is possible that the peace (shalom) referred to here is the state where there is no strife among men. But it could also be a reference to the inner peace that comes to the one who has a sense of place in the world, a calmness and security that come with the faith and perspective that lie at the heart of the greeting we give one another this day: Shabbat Shalom.