YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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***Tehillim* (Series II)**

**Rav Elchanan Samet**

**Shiur#03: *Tehillim* 100 – "A Psalm of Thanksgiving" - Appendix II**

**The Psalm’s Heading and It’s Place in the Liturgy**

### I. *Mizmor le-toda -* "A psalm of thanksgiving" – what does this mean?

In our examination of Psalm 100, we analyzed the psalm detached from its heading. We assume, as did many before us, that the headings in the psalms of *Tehillim* are not an integral part of the psalms themselves, nor were they written by the authors of the psalms. Rather, they were added to the psalms at some later point for various reasons and for different purposes.[[1]](#footnote-1) For this reason, we did not consider the psalm's heading over the course of its analysis. We wish now to discuss the heading of the psalm in itself; we will try to understand its meaning, clarify the connection between the heading and the body of the psalm, and see how the interpretation given to the heading impacted upon the way the psalm was used in the liturgy.

What, then, is the meaning of the heading to our psalm: *Mizmor le-toda*,"A psalm of thanksgiving"?

The Aramaic translation of *Tehillim* renders the heading of the psalm as: "Praise over a thanksgiving-offering." Several commentators, both ancient and modern, have accepted this interpretation. The *Metzudot* writes: "'A psalm of thanksgiving' – this psalm would be recited by one bringing a thanksgiving-offering for a miracle that had been performed for him." Tz. P. Chajes writes: "[Our psalm] was apparently written as a prayer to be recited while offering a thanksgiving-offering." Similarly, Amos Chakham writes in his *Da'at Mikra* commentary: "A psalm which was recited as a prayer of thanksgiving, and which accompanied the sacrifice of a thanksgiving-offering."

However, already in the commentary of Rashi we see a slight retreat from this explanation of "*toda*" in the sense of a thanksgiving-offering: "'A psalm of thanksgiving (*toda*)' – for thanksgiving (*hodaya*), to be recited over thanksgiving-offerings." A question may be raised in connection with Rashi's remark: If the word *toda* means *hodaya*,"thanksgiving," how do we know that the psalm was meant "to be recited over thanksgiving-offerings"? Perhaps the heading merely means that the psalm is a prayer of verbal thanksgiving?

Indeed, beginning with the Radak and Rabbeinu Yeshaya of Trani, various commentators have explained our psalm's heading as unconnected to a thanksgiving-offering. The Radak writes: "'A psalm of thanksgiving' – that you should thank Him for the lovingkindness that He has performed for you." In other words, *toda* is intended in the sense of *hodaya*, "thanksgiving." Similar explanations were offered by Rabbeinu Yeshaya, the Meiri, Ibn Yachya, and the Malbim*.*

According to the first explanation, the psalm's heading informs us of the psalm's **use** in the Temple service. According to the second explanation, the heading defines the **content** of the psalm, establishing that it is a psalm of thanksgiving. With respect to the second explanation, however, it must be stated that this definition does not accord with the psalm's content. Our analysis of the psalm based on its content, its type, and its structure has brought us to the conclusion that it is not a psalm of thanksgiving, but rather a psalm of praise.[[2]](#footnote-2)

It appears, therefore, that preference should be given to the first explanation, the explanation that is based on the Aramaic translation, that the heading is meant to establish the psalm's use – that it should be recited when bringing a thanksgiving-offering. This does not mean that the psalm was written from the outset for this purpose,[[3]](#footnote-3) but only that after it was written, it was adopted as the psalm to be recited over a thanksgiving-offering, and that the heading informs us of this use that was assigned to the psalm.

There are other reasons for preferring the explanation of the word *toda* in the sense of a thanksgiving-offering.

First of all, in most instances of the word *toda* in the Bible, the term is used as the name of an offering, or at least as a term connected to a thanksgiving-offering and the manner in which it was brought. (We already noted this at the end of section VII, and in note 9 there.)

In addition, many headings of psalms in the book of *Tehillim* contain terms that, although we do not know their precise meaning, presumably served as instructions as to how the psalms were to be sung in the Temple.[[4]](#footnote-4) If we explain that the heading "a psalm of thanksgiving," relates to a thanksgiving-offering, we have then yet another heading connected to the Temple service, albeit in a different way than the musical terms.

Finally, the word *toda* appears in the body of the psalm in verse 4: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise." In this verse, the reference is certainly to a thanksgiving-offering, or to a procession of those bringing such a sacrifice, as we are dealing with entry into the Temple gates and courtyards. It may be assumed that there is a connection between what is stated in the body of the psalm and the heading, which uses the identical word.

It seems then that the heading in our psalm – "A psalm of thanksgiving" – indicates the use of the psalm in the framework of the Temple service. It assigns the psalm to those bringing a thanksgiving-offering, who should recite it over their sacrifice, or perhaps when they come to the Temple with a procession of celebrants in anticipation of the bringing of the offering. If so, the heading indicates nothing regarding the plain meaning of the psalm, nor does it reflect the circumstances surrounding its writing or the purpose of its composition, and so one need not consider it when analyzing the body of the psalm as it was written.

Now the question arises: Why was Psalm 100 chosen to serve in the Temple as the psalm of those bringing a thanksgiving-offering? What is the connection between a psalm of praise, which according to its plain meaning refers to the Messianic period (as we clarified at the end of the body of this study), and a thanksgiving-offering brought by the individual during the time of the Temple for a miracle that had been performed for him? Even the thanksgiving-offering mentioned in the second half of the psalm is not a thanksgiving-offering brought by an individual, but rather a thanksgiving-offering brought by the people of Israel as a whole for having been redeemed in the end of days!

This question is, in fact, not difficult at all. The use of the psalms of *Tehillim* in the Temple service (and later in the synagogue) need not accord with the plain sense of the psalms. The selection of the psalm to accompany the ceremony of the sacrifice of a thanksgiving-offering is clearly connected to what is stated in the second half of the psalm: "Enter into His gates with **thanksgiving** and into His courts with praise; **give** **thanks** to Him and bless His name." Mention is made here of a thanksgiving-offering, the gates of the Temple, and it courts, and the directive is given here to come to the Temple with a thanksgiving-offering, to thank God and to bless His name. These verses are most appropriate to serve as the song of those bringing a thanksgiving-offering in a joyous procession to the Temple.[[5]](#footnote-5) What is the problem if they have been detached from their broader context of the entire psalm? Many midrashic expositions of verses are based on such a detachment of the verses from their context, and the designation of our psalm based on what is stated in the heading is a kind of midrashic exposition.

It may be added that the fact that our psalm is a short and general anthem of praise to God is precisely what makes it fit to be designated the psalm of those bringing a thanksgiving-offering to the Temple. A clear psalm of thanksgiving (e.g., Psalm 30) is less appropriate for this stage of the arrival of the celebrants in the Temple. It is possible that at the time of the actual sacrifice of the offering, the person bringing the offering would choose one of the psalms of thanksgiving that suited him personally in light of the circumstances of the particular miracle for which the offering was being brought.

### II. The use of our psalm in the liturgy

According to all of the liturgical rites followed today, Psalm 100, *Mizmor le-toda*, enjoys a place of honor, after the *Barukh she-Amar* blessing, at the beginning of *Pesukei De-Zimra.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

The question that we would like to clarify here relates to the source of this practice – who established it and when, and what was the reason for doing so. The later commentators and codifiers, by whose day the practice of reciting the psalm was already an accepted fact, suggest various reasons for reciting it,[[7]](#footnote-7) but a discussion of the reason for the practice requires, of course, knowledge concerning the development of the practice. Since there is no clear documentation that can answer these questions, we will try to carefully outline our supposition regarding the development of this practice, using the relevant sources: the prayer books from the periods of the *Ge’onim* and the *Rishonim*, and the books dealing with this issue.

### A. the earliest evidence of the practice

***Seder Rav Amram Gaon*,**[[8]](#footnote-8) in the weekday *Pesukei De-Zimra,* states that one should recite several verses after *Barukh She-Amar* (the verses of *Yehi Khevod*), but there is no mention whatsoever of *Mizmor Le-toda* (pp. 7-10 of Goldschmidt edition). Similarly, in ***Siddur Rav Sa'adya Gaon*,**from about two generations later, there is no mention of our psalm among the psalms that are recited as part of *Pesukei De-Zimra* (*Siddur Rav Sa'adya Gaon*, pp. 32-34).

Let us turn now to two later prayer books, which reflect the Sefardic and North African custom: In ***Siddur Rabbi Shelomo Be-Rabbi Natan*,** the *Av Bet Din* of Sijilmassa, Morocco (c. beginning of the 12th century),[[9]](#footnote-9) there is also no mention of the recitation of *Mizmor Le-Toda*" in *Pesukei De-Zimra*, and the **Rambam** similarly does not mention it in his presentation of the liturgy (at the end of *Sefer Ahava*).

However, in the *siddurim* of Germany and northern France of roughly the same period (12th century), the practice of reciting *Mizmor Le-Toda* is mentioned. In ***Siddur Rashi***,[[10]](#footnote-10)sec. 417 (p. 208), we find:

When a person enters the synagogue, before reciting *Pesukei De-Zimra*, he should start with these verses… And he recites the series of blessings [*birkot ha-shachar*]… and afterwards, the entire order until**: "A psalm of thanksgiving. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth." And if it is Shabbat, he should skip *Mizmor Le-Toda*,**and start: "To the chief musician. A psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19).

And I saw written: Why do we not recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat? Because they would recite it over a thanksgiving-offering… And since it was assigned to a thanksgiving-offering, and a thanksgiving-offering does not override Shabbat, we skip it on Shabbat, so that one not say that a thanksgiving-offering overrides Shabbat. And he concludes *Pesukei De-Zimra* in order and starts: *Yishtabach Shimkha*.

 In ***Machzor Vitri*** of Rabbeinu Simcha,[[11]](#footnote-11) which is also rooted in the school of Rashi, in the order of the weekday prayers after the blessing of *Barukh She-Amar* (pp. 62-63), reference is made to the recitation of *Hodu* and an assortment of verses from the book of *Tehillim*,**"until 'and His faithfulness to all generations'"** – that is, until the end of Psalm 100. Here it is added: **"On Shabbat, *Mizmor Le-Toda* is skipped,** because a thanksgiving-offering is not offered on Shabbat… On Shabbat one says: 'To the chief musician' (Psalm 19)." And here mention is made of all the additional psalms that are recited on Shabbat. Similar remarks are found in the order of the Shabbat morning prayer (p. 89):

And we go to the synagogue and recite all the blessings in accordance with the daily practice… And we begin with the psalms as the Sages instituted the daily liturgy, **and we skip *Mizmor Le-Toda*,** because a thanksgiving-offering is not offered on Shabbat, and we add: "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19)…

 In 5732, R. Moshe Hirschler published in Jerusalem two *siddurim* authored by Ashkenazi *Rishonim*, based on manuscripts, in a single volume: ***Siddur Rabbeinu Shelomo*,** which he attributes to R. Shelomo ben R. Shimshon of Worms,[[12]](#footnote-12) and ***Siddur Chasidei Ashkenaz***, which was written by the students of the leading figures among the Ashkenazi pietists several generations later. The second *siddur* is sort of an explanation and expansion of the earlier *siddur.*

 In ***Siddur Rabbeinu Shelomo*,** in the section describing the recitation of *Pesukei De-Zimra* on weekdays, the author also lists the additional psalms that are recited on Shabbat, and makes no mention whatsoever of *Mizmor Le-Toda*,neither on weekdays nor on Shabbat (secs. 11-12 and on). But in the section dealing with the Shabbat prayers (sec. 58), which once again lists the psalms that are added on Shabbat, *Mizmor Le-Toda* is mentioned negatively, as a psalm that is not recited on Shabbat:

The prayers of Shabbat: On Shabbat, psalms of praise and exaltation are added in *Pesukei De-Zimra…* Because Shabbat is a day of rest on which no work is performed, a person can stay longer in the synagogue. By right these should be recited on weekdays as well, but because people would be kept from their work they refrained from doing so.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**And *Mizmor Le-Toda*, which is recited on weekdays,[[14]](#footnote-14) is not recited on Shabbat.** Because a thanksgiving-offering is not brought on Shabbat, and those who brought a thanksgiving-offering on weekdays would recite it, and there are four who are obligated to offer thanks, those who went out to sea, those who crossed the desert, sick people [who recovered], and prisoners who were released from jail, and all of them bring [an offering in] the house of God.

And one starts with: "The heavens declare the glory of God"… By right, this should be recited every day to praise the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written, "Day to day utters speech" (*Tehillim* 19:3), but because of the burden on the community, who are not free from work, [they do not do so]. But on Shabbat, when there is no work, it is recited.

Rabbeinu Shelomo repeats this idea also with respect to the additional psalms that follow, each time explaining that owing to their content and their importance, they should be recited every day, but we suffice with reciting them on Shabbat because then there is no cancelation of work.

In ***Siddur Chasidei* Ashkenaz**,which was written several generations after *Siddur Rabbeinu Shelomo* and which is sort of an explanation and expansion of that *siddur*, *Mizmor Le-Toda*, which was absent from *Siddur Rabbeinu Shelomo*, is mentionedin the section dealing with the weekday morning prayer. After an explanation of the verses of *Hodu*, there is an explanation of *Mizmor Le-Toda* (p. 28). After the explanation, a comment is made, the meaning of which will be discussed below:

*Mizmor Le-Toda* – because a thanksgiving-offering is not brought on Shabbat, it was established that this psalm be recited on weekdays.

We see, then, that in Germany and northern France, beginning in the twelfth century, the custom was to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* on weekdays, but on Shabbat the psalm was skipped. This is the prevalent custom today in most Jewish communities.[[15]](#footnote-15)

### B. The development of the custom

From where did the practice of reciting *Mizmor Le-Toda* in the weekday *Pesukei De-Zimra* enter the liturgical rites of Germany and northern France beginning in the twelfth century (from there, later spreading to the other liturgical rites)? There is no mention of this practice in the *siddurim* penned by the *Ge’onim*, nor is it found in the rites of northern Africa and Spain in the parallel period. From where did the Franco-German practice arise?

The answer to this question may, nevertheless, be found in *Siddur Rav Amram Gaon.*

Let us turn to the order of the Shabbat prayers in this early *siddur.* Following the passages dealing with the sacrifices, it is stated there (p. 68): "And the prayer leader stands up and begins…," and in the continuation we find a list of verses and psalms that are added on Shabbat to the *Pesukei De-Zimra* that is recited on weekdays.

The editor of the volume (Daniel Goldschmidt) writes at the top of p.69: "From here on, the manuscripts vary as to the order and the scope of the psalms." He presents three parallel columns, with the versions of the three manuscripts upon which he bases his edition. Two of the three manuscripts, the manuscript referred to in his edition as MS M (a Spanish *siddur* containing *Seder Rav Amram*, the oldest of the three manuscripts) and the manuscript referred to as MS Z (an Italian manuscript) **include *Mizmor Le-Toda* among the psalms added on Shabbat!**

In 5737, Prof. Shraga Abramson published (in *Sinai* 81) pages from the Cairo Geniza containing parts of *Siddur Rav Amram Gaon.* As opposed to the manuscripts available to Goldschmidt, which were all from the west, the Geniza fragments originated in the lands of the east. On pp. 224-227, we find the Shabbat *Pesukei De-Zimra*, and on p. 225 we find *Mizmor Le-Toda* among the psalms recited on Shabbat!

The custom that is reflected in these manuscripts of *Seder Rav Amram* was to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* in the *Pesukei De-Zimra* **of Shabbat, and not of weekdays!**

What is the connection between Psalm 100 and the psalms that are added to the Shabbat *Pesukei De-Zimra*? The answer is simple: Our psalm is a classic psalm of praise, very similar in content and spirit to most of the psalms that are added on Shabbat, which are also psalms of praise and exaltation of God, as are the six psalms included in the *Pesukei De-Zimra* recited on weekdays. These additional psalms are a special custom for Shabbat and constitute a quasi-expansion of the basic *Pesukei De-Zimra.*[[16]](#footnote-16)

It stands to reason that this expanded Shabbat practice, which includes *Mizmor Le-Toda*, as it is reflected in most of the manuscripts of *Seder Rav Amram*, reached Franco-Germany as well. But for the Sages of those lands, reciting *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat was problematic, for the reason repeated in all of their *siddurim*: A thanksgiving-offering is not brought on Shabbat, and this psalm is connected to the thanksgiving-offering, and therefore it is inappropriate to be recited on Shabbat! Therefore, these Sages decided to skip *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat, thus changing the customary practice that had reached them from Babylonia (perhaps via Italy).

It would appear that at first, the practice of reciting *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat was cancelled, but it was still not recited on weekdays.

This stage may be reflected in the *siddur* of Rabbeinu Shelomo. Rabbeinu Shelomo was of the opinion that by right, the additional psalms should be recited on weekdays as well, as he writes in their regard time after time in his discussion of the Shabbat liturgy (section 58). At the end of his remarks, he even argues that the recitation of the additional psalms "was primarily enacted for weekdays, with the exception of 'A psalm, a poem for the Sabbath' and 'The Lord reigns,' which are psalms that were instituted for Shabbat." He proves his argument and concludes: "And when they saw that the majority of the community was unable to adhere to this enactment because it interfered with their work, they cancelled it on weekdays, and left it on Shabbat. **And one who recites them on weekdays, blessing will rest upon him."[[17]](#footnote-17)**

Rabbeinu Shelomo is, however, aware of the fact that according to the customary practice these psalms were not recited on weekdays, and therefore he opens section 11 with the sentence: "The custom in Mainz **on Shabbat** is that the prayer leader starts: 'Give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name….'" This proves that in his day, it was still not customary to recited *Hodu* on weekdays, at least in Mainz.

This may be the reason that in the sections dealing with weekdays (11-18), there is no mention whatsoever of *Mizmor Le-Toda*, because it was still not the custom to recite it on weekdays, and on Shabbat it was skipped. However, when he reaches section 58, where Rabbeinu Shelomo spells out the psalms recited on Shabbat, he writes: "And *Mizmor Le-Toda*, which is recited on weekdays, is not recited on Shabbat," which seems to be proof that this psalm was recited on weekdays. But his intention is clarified in the continuation: "Because a thanksgiving-offering is not brought on Shabbat, **and those who brought a thanksgiving-offering on weekdays would recite it,**[[18]](#footnote-18) and there are four who are obligated to offer thanks… and all of them bring [an offering in] the house of God." We see, then, that his intent is that *Mizmor Le-Toda* was recited **in the Temple** over the thanksgiving-offering only on weekdays, and therefore it should not be recited in the Shabbat prayers.

Not long afterwards, parts of the additions recited on Shabbat made their way into the *Pesukei De-Zimra* recited on weekdays, in the spirit of the words of Rabbeinu Shelomo, that "by right, this should be recited every day to praise the Holy One, blessed be He." This "invasion" included *Hodu* and the verses that follow it,[[19]](#footnote-19) and with them, *Mizmor Le-Toda* was also established to be recited on weekdays.

The recitation of *Mizmor Le-Toda* was established for weekdays because it had been cancelled on Shabbat! This is sort of a compensation for Psalm 100. Originally it had been among the special psalms recited on Shabbat, but owing to its heading, it was no longer deemed fit for Shabbat, and it was left an "orphan." When the practice developed to add psalms even on weekdays, the psalm was adopted and found its place as a permanent addition recited on weekdays.

Thus, we find in *Siddur Rashi* and in *Machzor Vitri* the custom to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* in the *Pesukei De-Zimra* recited on weekdays, as we saw above. Later, in *Siddur Chasidei Ashkenaz*(p. 28), we find the reason to recite it on weekdays, precisely as we have proposed:

*Mizmor Le-Toda* – Because a thanksgiving-offering is not brought on Shabbat, it was established that this psalm be recited on weekdays.

Now that we have reconstructed the development of the new custom, lest us attempt to explain the reasons for the differences in practice regarding whether to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* or to refrain from reciting it. The practice of reciting *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat takes into consideration the psalm's **content** as a psalm of praise, which is appropriate for expanding the *Pesukei De-Zimra* on Shabbat. The psalm's heading was certainly viewed by those who observed the ancient custom as a technical matter that is irrelevant with respect to the question of whether or not the psalm is fit to be recited on Shabbat. But in the eyes of the rabbinic authorities in France and Germany, the heading was critical. They viewed it as determining the psalm's use in the Temple service, providing the psalm with its importance and uniqueness.[[20]](#footnote-20) This being the case, they thought that the psalm was inappropriate for Shabbat and Festivals, and that it should be skipped on those days.[[21]](#footnote-21)

### c. Remnants of the original custom

 Is it possible to find in the halakhic literature support for our position that the original custom was to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* specifically on Shabbat, as part of the additional psalms of *Pesukei De-Zimra*, and not on weekdays?

 Indeed, this custom continued in various places for centuries, even though it had to defend itself against the arguments raised against it in France and Germany.

 In the book *Shibbolei Ha-Leket* written by R. Tzidkiya ben Avraham the doctor,[[22]](#footnote-22) in section 76, which carries the heading: "The law of psalms of Shabbat that are recited… *Mizmor Le-Toda*…," we read:

*Mizmor Le-Toda* – There are places where this is recited on weekdays, and not recited on Shabbat. And I found a reason for their custom in the name of Rabbeinu Shelomo *ztz"l*,[[23]](#footnote-23) because a private offering is not offered on Shabbat, and a thanksgiving-offering is a private offering, and it can be sacrificed on any day except for Shabbat. **And in our place [Rome] the custom is to recite it on Shabbat and not on weekdays.**[[24]](#footnote-24)

Indeed, this custom persisted among Italian Jews until this very day, and it is documented in the *machzor* of Bologna published in 5300 and in the *machzor* of Leghorn, published in 5616.[[25]](#footnote-25)

However, it was not only in Italy that this custom persisted, but apparently also in Spain. In *Tur*, *Orach Chayim*, sec. 51, in the section governing the laws of the morning blessings, we read:

There are places where it is customary to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda*, "Give thanks to the Lord, call by His name," as it is written in *Divrei Ha-Yamim*, because David instituted that it be recited every day in the presence of the ark… and every place in accordance with its custom. In Germany, it is the custom not to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat and Festivals, because a thanksgiving-offering is not offered on those days. But there is no need to prevent him from reciting it, as there is no concern lest they come to offer it when the Temple will be rebuilt, as people do not err with regard to this.[[26]](#footnote-26)

From the words of R. Yaakov ben Rabbi Asher, the author of the *Tur* (Spain, beginning of 14th century), it is evident that where he lived, it was customary to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat, although it is not clear whether in his place it was customary to recite it also on weekdays ("There are places where it is customary").

In the *siddur* of a disciple of the *Tur*, *Peirush Ha-Berakhot Ve-Ha-Tefillot Le-Rabbi David Abudraham* (Spain, middle of the 14th century),[[27]](#footnote-27) the following picture emerges: In "*Seder Shacharit shel Chol U-eirusha*," before *Barukh She-Amar*, the Abudraham writes: "There are places where it is customary to recite… 'Give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name' and the psalm 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' But it is not our custom to recite them except for on Shabbat and Festivals."[[28]](#footnote-28) No mention is made of *Mizmor Le-Toda*, either before *Barukh She-Amar* or after it.[[29]](#footnote-29)

But in "*Siddur Shacharit shel Shabbat u-Peirusha*," in the *Pesukei de-Zimra*, the Abudraham writes after the blessing of *Barukh She-Amar*:

**And he recites *Mizmor Le-Toda*.** And Even Ha-Yarchi[[30]](#footnote-30) writes: In France it is customary not to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat and the Festivals, because a thanksgiving-offering is not brought on Shabbat… **But in Provence and in Spain it is recited** [on Shabbat], but this is not possible. Thus far [Even ha-Yarchi]. But I say that it is possible to recite it and one should not stop [another person from doing so]. For one should not say lest they will come to sacrifice a thanksgiving-offering [on Shabbat] when the Temple is rebuilt, as people do not err with regard to this.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Thus we have seen that in Spain and in Italy (and perhaps also in Provence) the original custom was preserved to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat as part of the additional psalms recited on Shabbat, but not on weekdays.

R. Avraham ben Natan Ha-Yarchi, who was familiar with the French custom, which is the opposite of the custom in Spain and in Provence, and who was familiar with the rationale offered by the French Sages for their custom, reacted to the Spanish custom with the words: "But this is not possible." According to him, the French custom is based on a halakhic consideration; he cannot understand how one can behave in a manner that is the very opposite of the "correct" custom. It seems, however, that it was precisely the members of the Franco-German community who reversed the original custom, based on halakhic arguments that were introduced in the academies of the Sages of these countries.

An original solution to the tension between the ancient custom to recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat because of its lofty content and the later custom to refrain from reciting it on Shabbat because of its heading is found precisely in northern France and documented in *Sefer Ha-Rokeach* of R. Elazar of Worms (1165-1240). There in section 319 we find a short discussion dealing with the days when *Mizmor Le-Toda* is not recited:

The customary practice to skip *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Shabbat and the Festivals is because [a thanksgiving-offering] is not brought on those days, as it is an obligatory sacrifice without a fixed time [to be brought, and a sacrifice without a fixed time does not override Shabbat and the Festivals]… But I heard about the Rabbi, R. Eliyahu, **who would not skip it, but only these two words, *Mizmor Le-Toda*,"A psalm of thanksgiving,"** and he would begin: "Make a joyful noise, all the earth," **as this is praise of the Holy One, blessed be He.**

The custom of R. Eliyahu, a contemporary and colleague of Rabbeinu Tam (12th century), preserved the original custom to recite the psalm on Shabbat, its content making it appropriate to be included among the psalms added on Shabbat, as it contains "praise of the Holy One, blessed be He," and he resolved the problem raised by the French and Germany Sages by omitting the heading, "A psalm of thanksgiving."[[32]](#footnote-32)

R. Eliyahu's practice reflects an understanding similar to the one that we presented in this study, that each psalm should be interpreted on its own merits and that the heading is not an integral part of the psalm.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. For an example of this phenomenon, see our book, pp. 106-109, appendix I to our study of Psalm 30, which deals with the heading of that psalm. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See section I, and note 6 there. We repeated this argument in a slightly different form in section IX. The author of the heading of our psalm is not bound by terms that we use with respect to the various types of psalms, but even without our comments, the first half of the psalm is wholly unconnected to "thanksgiving," and as for the second half of the psalm, it may be argued that a **call** to give thanks (which does not even say **for what** thanks should be offered) is not an act of thanksgiving! [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is the understanding of Tz. P. Chajes and Amos Chakham, regarding which we expressed our reservations in section II, note 15, of our study. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. These "musical" headings include instructions as to how the psalm was to be performed by the Levite choir in the Temple, and the names of musical instruments, but they do not deal at all with the psalm's content. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. It stands to reason that the psalm was not recited at the time of the sacrifice of the thanksgiving-offering, as suggested by Tz. P. Chajes and Amos Chakham, but rather when the offering was brought to the Temple gates in a celebratory procession. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. "*Pesukei De-Zimra*," or as they are called by the *Rishonim*, “*zemirot*,” are the six psalms that close the book of *Tehillim* (Psalms 145-150), for whose recitation the Sages instituted an opening blessing (*Barukh She-Amar*) and a closing blessing (*Yishtabach*).

According to most rites, *Mizmor Le-Toda* is recited immediately after *Barukh She-Amar*, while according to the Ashkenazi rite, the verses of *Hodu* (I *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 16) until "*ki gamal ali*" are recited after *Barukh She-Amar*, and only afterwards is *Mizmor Le-Toda* recited.

*Shulchan Arukh* (*Orach Chayim* 51:9) states: "*Mizmor Le-Toda* should be sung with a melody." The source for this ruling is found in *Orchot Chayym* of R. Aharon Ha-Kohen (Provence, 14th century), *Hilkhot Me'ah Berakhot*, section 26, in the name of R. Natan. An earlier source is "*Peirush Ha-Tefilot Ve-Ha-Berakhot*" of R. Yehuda bar Yakar, the Ramban's teacher (Provence-Spain, 12th-13th centuries), who writes: "After *Hodu*, one recites *Mizmor Le-Toda* with a sweet melody and with longer singing than the other psalms" (ed. Sh. Yerushalmi [Jerusalem, 5739], p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For example, the reason mentioned in the *Shulchan Arukh*, based on the *Orach Chayim* (see previous note): "For all the songs will cease in the future, except for *Mizmor Le-Toda*" (based on *Vayikra Rabba* 9:7: "All the sacrifices will cease in the future, but the thanksgiving-offering will not cease; all the prayers will cease, but thanksgiving will not cease." R. Y. Baer, in his *Siddur Avodat Yisrael* explains the custom as follows: "And they instituted to recite this psalm, as it is like a blessing of thanksgiving for acts of lovingkindness, for there is no day on which a miracle is not performed for a person, and the beneficiary of a miracle does not recognize the miracle, and he must offer thanks." [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. R. Amram Gaon was the Gaon of the Yeshiva of Sura in the middle of the 9th century (he died in 875). In response to a request by the Jews of Spain, he wrote a prayer-book containing the text and laws of the liturgy and sent it to Spain. His *siddur* has served as the basis of the liturgy and its customs in Jewish communities throughout the world until this very day. The manuscripts of this work are late (beginning in the 14th century), but whole sections of the book were included in *Siddur Rashi* and in *Machzor Vitri*, which antedate these manuscripts. *Seder Rav Amram* underwent many changes over the generations, in accordance with the customs and readings in the time and place where it was copied, and therefore it is difficult to determine the original text of the book. Despite this difficulty, the liturgical scholar Daniel Goldschmidt published an edition (Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 5732), based on manuscripts and indirect testimony from books that cite extensively from Rav Amram's book. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Siddur Rabbi Shelomo be-Rabbi Natan*, published and translated from the Arabic by Shmuel Chaggai (Kreuzer) (Jerusalem, 5755), pp. 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Published by R. Shlomo Buber and completed by Yaakov Freimann, *Chevrat Mekitzei Nirdamim* (Berlin, 5655). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ed. Shimon Horwitz (Nuremberg, 5683). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. R. Shelomo ben R. Shimshon was the leader of the Jewish community of Worms until the persecutions of 1096, when he died as a martyr. He was a contemporary and a colleague of Rashi. Regarding him, see A. Grossman, *Chakhmei Ashkenaz Ha-Rishonim* (Jerusalem, 5741), chap. 8, p. 326ff. Later in that same chapter (pp. 346-348), Grossman vigorously rejects attributing the *siddur* to R. Shelomo ben R. Shimshon, and attributes it instead to R. Eliezer ben Natan (Raban), who lived two generations later. There is room to discuss some of the proofs adduced by Grossman against attributing the book to R. Shelomo. In any event, Grossman does not explain the declaration at the beginning of the *siddur* in the manuscript: "I will begin the *siddur* of R. Shelomo" – who is this R. Shelomo, and how is he connected to R. Eliezer ben Natan? [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This explains the fact that Rabbeinu Shelomo lists the additional psalms recited on Shabbat even in the section dealing with the weekday prayers (sections 11-18). According to him, by right they should be recited every day. Because of this, he explains in those sections also the psalms that are clearly associated with Shabbat: "A psalm, a poem for the Sabbath day" and "The Lord reigns" (Psalms 92 and 93). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This does not accord with what is stated in sections 11-12, which deal with the weekday prayers, for no mention whatsoever is made of this psalm there. We will try to resolve this difficulty below. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. With the exception of the Italian Jewish rite, which will be discussed below. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This expansion varied from place to place and from time to time. There were those who added more and those who added less, and the choice of psalms varied in accordance with the different rites. There is, however, a common denominator shared by all the rites: The recitation of Psalm 19 ("The heavens declare the glory of God"); the recitation of Psalm 92 ("A psalm, a poem for the Sabbath day"); and perhaps also Psalm 136 ("The Great Hallel"). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See note 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The text reads *otan* (them), but it would appear that it must be corrected to *ota* (it) – *Mizmor Le-Toda*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The reason for reciting the verses of *Hodu* even on weekdays is found in *Siddur Rabbeinu Shelomo*, section 11: These verses were recited by Assaf "[in the Temple] every day," but nevertheless, "this is done now only on Shabbat, when a large number of people are found in the synagogue." Later it became customary for these verses to be recited every day, as had been the practice in the Temple. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. A similar discussion of the relationship between the psalm's content and its heading appears in our study above. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Nevertheless, we find reports of the recitation of *Mizmor Le-Toda* on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, in places where it was omitted on Shabbat and other Festivals. In *Kenesset Ha-Gedola* on *Tur, Shulchan Arukh* 51, the author notes that some are accustomed to recite it on Rosh Hashana and on Yom Kippur because it contains the passage, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth," which is appropriate for the character of the day. According to this custom, the **content** of the psalm overcame its **heading** on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. R. Tzidkiya lived in Rome in the middle of the 13th century. His book, *Shibbolei Ha-Leket*,deals with the laws of *Orach Chayyim*, and was published in a scientific edition by Sh. K. Mirsky (New York, 5726) based on a manuscript written during the author's lifetime. The quotation here is from p. 298 of that edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Who is this Rabbeinu Shelomo? Those who cite the words of the *Shibbolei Ha-Leket* understood that the reference is to Rashi (*Beit Yosef* on *Tur* 281), and similar remarks do indeed appear in *Siddur Rashi*, as cited above. R. Hirschler, who edited *Siddur Rabbeinu Shelomo*, surmises that the reference is to what is stated in *Siddur Rabbeinu Shelomo*, section 58 (p. 149, and note 2, there). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In the continuation, he brings the reason offered by his brother, R. Binyamin, for the custom of the community of Rome, providing an aggadic reason for why *Mizmor Le-Toda* is appropriate specifically for Shabbat. On the other hand, the *Shibbolei Ha-Leket* offers no answer to the words of Rabbeinu Shelomo, failing to exlain why it should not be recited on Shabbat. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Daniel Goldschmidt's overview, "*Minhag Benei Roma*," in Shadal's *Mavo Le-Machzor Benei Roma*, ed. Goldschmidt (Tel-Aviv, 5726), p. 82 (psalms for weekdays) and p. 89 (Shabbat morning service, and note 58, there). It should be noted that in the Italian synagogue in Jerusalem, *Mizmor Le-Toda* is recited both on weekdays and on Shabbat. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The *Tur* repeats this argument in a more concise manner in *Hilkhot Shabbat*, *Orach Chayim* 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. R. Chayim Abudraham lived in Seville and wrote his book in about 1340. This *siddur* is one of the most comprehensive and important *siddurim* written during the period of the *Rishonim.* He often cites the *Tur*, which suggests that he was a disciple of his, if not directly, then by way of his book. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. In the edition of R. Sh.A. Wertheimer (Jerusalem, 5723), pp. 58-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Following his explanation of the blessing *Barukh She-Amar*, the Abudraham writes: "And afterwards they instituted that the psalms from the end of *Tehillim* be recited… from 'A praise of David' (Psalm145) to 'Let everything that has breath praise the Lord, Halleluya' (Psalm 150)." The commentator to *Sefer Abudraham*, R. Chayim Yehuda Ehrenreich, in his edition of the book (Klausenburg 5687, p. 235, note 67\*), writes: "The Ashkenazi custom is to recite after *Barukh she-amar* – *Hodu* and also *Mizmor Le-Toda*, and the words of our master below also imply that they would recite *Mizmor Le-Toda* on weekdays after *Barukh She-Amar*, **and it is astonishing that this is not mentioned here."** There is nothing astonishing here. Rather, this attests to the fact that in Spain, *Mizmor Le-Toda* was not recited on weekdays. The reference to "the words of our master below" seem to refer to "*Seder Shacharit shel Shabbat u-peirusha*" – see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. R. Avraham ben Natan Ha-Yarchi was born in Lunelle, Provence in about 1155, but he lived a good part of his life outside of Provence. He served as a rabbinical judge in Toledo, Spain, where he died in 1215. The citation below is from his *Sefer Ha-Manhig*, a large halakhic compendium, which was published in a scientific edition by Yitzchak Rafael (Mossad Ha-Rav Kook: Jerusalem, 5738). The cited passage appears in part I, *Dinei Tefilla*, p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The defense for the practice of reciting the psalm on Shabbat is, of course, taken from the *Tur*, section 51, cited above, the Aramaic words translated into Hebrew. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. A similar custom is documented in the Romanian rite, which preserves the ancient custom of reciting psalms from the book of *Tehillim* on Friday afternoon when Shabbat begins, including *Mizmor Le-Toda*, but without its heading, because thanksgiving-offerings are not brought on Shabbat. See E. Fleischer, *Tefilla U-Minhagei Tefilla Eretz Yisra'elim*, p. 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)