

Today, I want to talk to you about a psalm that most of us know very well: Psalm 145: Add a couple of verses to the beginning and one to the end, and we have Ashrei, a prayer so beloved that the rabbis included it in our liturgy three times each day!

This psalm is a beautifully constructed poem praising God. It is divided into two halves: an overview and specific examples; and each half is divided again into sections we may describe as What God Is and What God does. The words of the psalm pick up the themes using wonderful literary devices to convey these ideas. This psalm is such a poetic wonder that I could fill many of these weekly reflections.

This time, I want to look at only three verses in this psalm: the first, the middle, and the last.

- ארממך אלהי המלך ואברכה שמך לעולם ועד: I will extol you, my God, O King, and I will bless your name forever and ever.
- יודוך ה' כל-מעשיך וחסידיך יברוך: All your works acclaim you, O LORD, and your faithful ones bless you.
- תהלת ה' ידבר-פי ויברך כל-בשר שם קדשו לעולם ועד: Let my mouth speak the praise of the LORD, and may all creatures bless [God]'s holy name forever and ever.

Let us say that our goal is to change the structural and systemic problems gripping our world. We want everyone's experience to improve, meaning we need everyone to change what they are doing and how. The progression of these three verses from Psalm 145 - the prologue, the interlude, and the epilogue - help us to understand a task like this.

Based on these verses, we know the goal of the psalm is to have everyone and everything bless God forever. Before we can accomplish that universal goal, we have to reckon with our corner of the world: can we convince all of God's faithful to bless God? How can we accomplish that? The first verse, in the first person singular, makes it clear: We have to do it first.

Changing the world for the better - that is *tikkun olam*, repairing the world - is a daunting task. It is, however, a task that we cannot put off. Remember, always, that the big journeys begin with a single step, and changing the world begins with a single person: you yourself.

Shavua Tov.