

What Are Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs?

Three primary words used to describe the Old Testament psalms:

psalm (mizmor), song (shiyр), and prayer (tephillah)

Three words used in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16:

Psalms (psalmois (ψαλμοῖς) – psalmos)

Hymns (humnois (ᾠμοῖς) – humnos)

Spiritual Songs (odais pneumatikais (ὠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς) – ode)

Hebrew	Mizmor (מִזְמוֹר)	Tephillah (תְּפִלָּה)	Shiyр (שִׁיר)
English	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>Prayer</i>	<i>Song</i>
Greek	<i>Psalmois, ode</i>	<i>Humnos</i>	<i>Humnos, psalmos, ode</i>

- The Hebrew word *Mizmor* (psalm) is primarily translated in the Greek as either *Psalmois* (psalm) or *ode* (song)
- The Hebrew word *Tephillah* (prayer) is primarily translated in the Greek as *humnos* (hymn) when the word is used in reference to sung prayer
- The Hebrew word *Shiyр* (song) is variously translated in the Greek as *humnos* (hymn), *psalmos* (psalm), and *ode* (song). Given the generic meaning of the word “song,” the type of song referenced must be determined by the word that qualifies it (in this case, *spiritual*).
- Because the word *spiritual* refers almost universally to something given or imparted by the Holy Spirit, the phrase *spiritual songs* refers to songs given/imparted/inspired by the Holy Spirit, pointing us to the Book of Psalms, the largest and most comprehensive collection of songs given to us by the Holy Spirit

The Greek words translated as ***psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*** answer to the Hebrew words translated as ***psalms, prayers, and songs***

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