

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שיר של יום

Count-Down to Shabbos

MEANING:

The simple translation of the prayer

Today is the first day of the **Shabbos**, on which the Levites would **recite in the Holy Temple**.

היום יום ראשון בשבת,
שבו היו הלויים אומרים
בבית המקדש.

WORD TO THE WISE:

Meaning within the word



By counting the days of the week with reference to the forthcoming Shabbos, we tie our existence to the Shabbos (Ramban, Shemos 20:8). In contrast, the non-Jewish days of the week are named after the seven planets of classical astronomy: Sunday for the sun, Monday for the moon, Tuesday for Mars, Wednesday for Mercury, Thursday for Jupiter,

Friday for Venus and Saturday for Saturn (Wikipedia, Name of the days of the week).

Moreover, each day's *Shir* opens with the count toward Shabbos, i.e. היום יום ראשון בשבת (today is the first day of the Shabbos), which helps to fulfill the Torah's (Shemos 20:8) command to always remember the Shabbos—לקדשו (to sanctify it). Thus, we fulfill a mitzvah when we recite *Shir Shel Yom* with the introduction (using the appropriate day) היום יום ראשון בשבת (Ramban, ibid).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Connected to Sanctity

By opening with a count toward Shabbos, the *Shir Shel Yom* makes our entire week revolve around our holy day.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Guarding Our Treasure

The connection between Shabbos—a sanctification of time — and the Beis HaMikdash—a sanctification of a place—emerges clearly from the *Shir Shel Yom* as we connect Shabbos to the Beis HaMikdash—היום יום ראשון בשבת, שבו היו הלויים אומרים בבית המקדש. This connection also is obvious with the verse (Vayikra 26:2): “You shall observe My Sabbaths and you shall revere My Sanctuary.” What is the connection?

Rabbi Elyah Lopian (*Inspiration and Insight*, ArtScroll/Mesorah Publ., p. 30) observes that just as Shabbos provides the model for the eternal holiness of the Beis HaMikdash, the Beis HaMikdash provides a model for the deep reverence one must show upon entering Shabbos: “If the Torah is so concerned lest we enter the Temple area in a state of unpreparedness, or lest we behave disrespectfully when even facing that place, how careful must we be with regard to

the sanctity of Shabbos.”

We fulfill the mitzvah to “Safeguard the Sabbath day” (Devarim 5:12) by refraining from thirty-nine categories of *melachah* (creative activity). Beyond that, the mitzvah of “Remember Shabbos” provides the spice and spirit that gives the day its rejuvenating power. However, the impact disappears if one spends Shabbos pondering business, new purchases, chores, post-Shabbos plans, and so forth.

Chazal (Shabbos 10b) relate that G-d told Moshe: “I have a precious gift in My treasury...Shabbos is its name. Go and tell Israel I wish to present it to them.” This is a gift so divine that it could not even be absorbed by the one *neshamah* given to man. Therefore, G-d grants us a “*neshamah yeseirah*” (an extra *neshamah*) on Shabbos, to expand our spiritual capacity and enable us to drink in all that Shabbos offers.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

The Big Day

Devorah's wedding day was set for the week after Purim. Like any kallah, she was filled with excitement and overwhelmed with all the arrangements that needed to be completed before the big day. The first thing she did on the day after her engagement was to purchase a special calendar, her count-down calendar, on which she



would write each day's tasks to be completed and the days remaining to her wedding. As she crossed off the days and the wedding plans took shape, her excitement mounted to greater heights. For the two months, everything else took a back seat to Devorah's wedding, until at last the day arrived.

“Counting the days” to an event signifies eager anticipation. When we “count” to Shabbos, we instill in ourselves and demonstrate to Hashem how precious the day is to us. As we prepare for Shabbos throughout the week – drop off the dry cleaning, purchase food, invite guests, plan menus, work on *divrei Torah* for the table and so forth – we fulfill the mitzvah to “remember Shabbos” all week long, making Shabbos, and its inherent holiness, a main focal point of our lives.

Try This!

- ▶ Make a schedule for yourself of one small Shabbos preparation you can do each day of the week. Think of that preparation when you say (using the appropriate day) היום יום ראשון בשבת.

Did You Know

▶ Different Customs

There are different customs regarding the recitation of *Shir Shel Yom*. According to the Ashkenazic custom (Rema, Orach Chaim 123:2), *Shir Shel Yom* is recited after *Aleinu*. According the Sephard custom, one recites *Shir Shel Yom* immediately following the *Kaddish* of *U'va la'Tzion*, and only afterwards does one recite *Aleinu*.