

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

PESUKEI D'ZIMRA

The Next Step Up

ברוך שאמר... ישתבח...

INTRODUCTION TO PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH:

Pesukei D'Zimrah is a separate unit of Shacharis. Therefore, it begins with the blessing "Baruch She'amar" and concludes with the blessing "Yishtabach". This is similar to Hallel, which, as a complete unit, is introduced by, and concludes with a blessing. Note that *Nusach Sefard* places "Hodu" before "Boruch She'amar" to have it in closer proximity to the *Karbanos* section of Shacharis (The Complete ArtScroll Siddur, Pesukei D'Zimrah).

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



The root of the word "zimrah" is "zamor" which means **to cut or prune** (see Vayikrah 25:4). When one recites "Pesukei D'Zimrah" he is "pruning" the forces of *tumah* (defilement) which can obstruct the prayers' ascent to the Heavens. Through Pesukei D'Zimrah, we battle the "evil forces" created by our sins by expressing our deep feelings of coming closer to Hashem. (See Shulchan Aruch, Siman 54:3; Mishneh Berurah, Ibid, 5)

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Next Level Of Holiness

Pesukei D'Zimrah, which are recited in preparation for Shemoneh Esrei, **carry us to a higher level** of holiness in our prayers. This ascent mirrors the progress from the outer courtyards of the Beis HaMikdash into the Holy of Holies.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Step By Step To The Top

When a *Kohein* entered the Holy Temple, he could not go straight into the Holy of Holies. First, he had to enter the *Har HaBayis*, then the *Azarah*, and then the *Haichal*. Only then could he enter the Holy of Holies. **Similarly, one cannot enter directly into Shemoneh Esrei, the pinnacle of prayer, which is compared to the Holy of Holies.** Rather, there are steps leading to *Shemoneh Esrei*, which ascend to higher and higher levels, like a pyramid (Nefesh Shimshon, Pages 36-42).

First, on awakening, we express gratitude to Hashem that He restored our faculties (*Modeh Ani*). Then we ascend the first step, reciting *Birchos HaShachar*, which is comparable to entering the *Har HaBayis* – the area outside the holiest section of the Beis HaMikdash. At this first level of holiness, we recite blessings upon the most mundane of our day's activities – getting up, getting dressed, putting on shoes and so forth, elevating each by recognizing them each day as a new gift from G-d.

Pesukei D'Zimrah is the second step, comparable to entering the *Azara*. This is the area which begins the Camp of the Shechinah.

It is the place to which some of the sacrifices were brought, and it was invested with a higher level of holiness than the *Har HaBayis*. In a similar way, **Pesukei D'Zimrah are intended to reveal the light of Hashem's presence by praising Him for the natural bounty He bestows on us, enabling us to serve Him** (*Derech Hashem*, Volume 4, Chapter 6, Os 10).

Krias Shema and its *berachos*, in which one accepts the yoke of Heaven, is the third step. That is where a person comes to the recognition that Hashem is One; that He created the world and He controls it on a daily basis. This compares to the holiness of the *Haichal*.

The highest step on the ladder is when one recites Shemoneh Esrei, which is compared to entering the Holy of Holies. As Shulchan Aruch (Siman 98, Se'if 1) states: "(One) should regard it as if the Shechinah (Divine Presence) is before him...and...as if he was speaking before a human king, and (he) would then arrange his words and concentrate on them so that he would not stumble or fail. How much more so, before the King of kings who explores all thoughts and intentions."

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Coming Clean

The peasant arrives at the palace. The guard lets him in, for this king is eager and willing to meet his subjects. However, after the peasant's long trek, he is covered with dirt. His rough, patched clothing is caked with mud. His matted hair bears witness to days of travel on dusty roads. Not only does he look utterly unprepared for an audience with the king, but he feels unprepared as well.

Fortunately, the guard does not



bring him directly to the throne room. First, he sends him for a bath and a haircut. Then, he issues him a fresh, clean suit of clothing. The peasant feels clean, pure and unencumbered by the dirt that had clung to him. He knows that now, he will be pleasing in the king's eyes, and his petition will be well received.

As we make our way through

life each day, the forces of impurity in our world inevitably cling to us. As we recite Pesukei D'Zimrah, they are bathed away. **We emerge fresh, clothed in our renewed gratitude toward G-d for the wondrous world He has given us**, and ready to come closer to His presence.

As you begin to recite Pesukei D'Zimrah, visualize yourself finishing the first step of entry towards the Holy of Holies, the 'Har HaBayis', ascending to the next level of holiness, the 'Azara'.

Try This!

► Since time is usually an important factor in a daily Shacharis minyan, Pesukei D'Zimrah are often recited quickly and without much concentration. Nevertheless, you can enhance your connection with these beautiful prayers. **Choose just one or two meaningful lines of one segment.** Think about their meaning and say them with great concentration for one week. Choose two more for the following week, and so forth.

Did You Know

► Each Word Is Top Priority

The Pesukei D'Zimrah segments, which are mentioned in numerous places in the Gemara, are an important part of the Shacharis prayer. Shulchan Aruch (Siman 51:8) rules, **"One should not say the [Pesukei D'Zimrah] verses rapidly, but at a leisurely pace."** Mishneh Berurah (Ibid:20) explains that this is to avoid skipping or swallowing words. Rather, one should recite the words "as if he were counting money." In addition, one must be sure to pronounce each word separately especially where a word ends with the same letter that begins the subsequent word (Siman 61:20, 22).