

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH: HODU

Thanks for Everything

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer
Give thanks to Hashem, declare His name, make known among the peoples His actions... speak of all His wonders....

הודו לה' קראו בשמו
...הודיעו בעמים עלילותיו...
...שיחו בכל נפלאותיו....

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



When reciting Hodu, we begin with the words “*Hodu LaShem*,” which thank Hashem for the goodness that we have already received. The words “*Kiru BiShmo*” are meant to attribute everything to Hashem, as the verse (I Divrei Hayamim 29:14) declares, ‘For everything is from You, and from Your hand have we given to You.’ Similarly, the Torah (Bereishis 13:4) states that the Patriarch Avraham attributed to Hashem his peaceful return from Egypt to Eretz Yisroel: “And there Avram invoked Hashem by Name.” The Vilna Gaon (Siach Yitzchok) explains that when we attribute everything to Hashem, we fulfill the mitzvah (Devarim 8:17-18): “And you may say in your heart, ‘My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!’ Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth...”

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Recognizing Hashem's Kindness

Since Hashem needs nothing from us, and there is nothing we can do to benefit Him, we know that everything He gives is strictly out of His love for us. In truth, every kindness we enjoy is an appropriate object of *hoda'ah*, **the humble recognition that we are being given more than we can possibly earn.** We give thanks to Hashem by constantly praising His name and glorifying Him before the rest of the world.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Speaking Our Gratitude

Our daily lives are rich with blessings great and small. Deep in our hearts, we know that all of this comes from Hashem. But how can a person keep this knowledge in the forefront of his mind as he goes through daily life?

A powerful way to create a reality out of this amorphous feeling is to *קראו בשמו... שיחו בכל נפלאותיו...* “declare His Name...speak of all His wonders.” This enables us to focus on the gifts we receive and to actually recognize the Giver.

Speech is a powerful tool for transforming feelings of emunah into reality. This is the meaning of King David's words: “*He'emanti ki ada'bear* — I have kept faith because I speak.” (Tehillim 116:10) Rav Mattisyahu Salomon illustrates this principle through the story of the righteous Joseph:

The Torah (Bereishis 39: 3-4) tells us, “And his master saw that God was with him, and that God brings success to everything he does ... and he appointed him over his household.” The Midrash explains that the words “God was with him,” indicate that Joseph constantly spoke about God to those around him. When he was praised for a job well done, he would say, “... I deserve no credit. It is all the Master of the Universe. Thank Him.”

We are required also to *הודיעו בעמים עלילותיו* “make His acts known amongst the people.” Besides attributing everything to Hashem, we must also “**reveal His name and kindness**” to other nations of the world. Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus expounds that this should be done everywhere, even when among non-Jews.

VISUALIZE:
Images that bring the prayer to life

Sometimes, G-d's Kindness Is Clear As A Bell

It seemed too soon for the newly married couple to be forced to compromise their dreams. Only six months ago, they had settled into their Jerusalem apartment, thrilled about the prospect of living the kollel life. Menachem would learn full-time, while Devorah would assist with her neighbor's playgroup. That small income, plus a modest monthly donation from each of their families and a little of their wedding money each month would be enough to afford the couple a modest yet decent lifestyle.



It was only a few weeks later when Devorah's father lost his job. Next, Menachem's family ran into a financial crisis that made their part of the budget impossible to finance. Devorah sought a more lucrative job, but months later, she had still not found one. The wedding money was half-gone. “I guess we'll have to go back to the States and stay with my parents for awhile until we get back on our feet,” Devorah said. “It's not so bad. The same thing happened to a couple of

my friends. We'll survive.” Just then, the phone rang. After a serious, ten-minute conversation, Menachem hung up, smiled broadly at his wife and announced, “Don't ask me how. Don't ask me why, but that was my great-uncle Zev, and he wants to help us out. We can stay!”

“Hodu L'Hashem ki tov!” Devorah exclaimed as her heart fluttered in excitement. There was nothing else to say.

Each person can think of a time when something went unexpectedly right. Remember that feeling when you say “Hodu,” and you can savor the taste of gratitude again and again.

Try This! ▶ **Capture The Moment**

Recall a time in your life when you were acutely aware of a blessing from Hashem – the day of your wedding, the birth of a child, a good medical report – and try to recall the feeling of gratitude. This week, when you say the words “*hodu l'Hashem*” in davening, think of that feeling.

Did You Know

▶ **Right On Time**

The *Shulchan Aruch* (Siman 51: 8) urges us to recite *Pesukei D'Zimrah* carefully, in an unrushed manner. *Mishneh Berurah* (Siman 52:1) advises us to arrive at shul early. This is because it is stated that the angel who instructed the author of the *Beis Yosef* admonished him to arrive at shul early in order to be able to recite all the prayers in the correct order without omission. By omitting prayers, one disturbs their “flow.”