

BY THE AUTHOR OF "Praying With Passion"



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BY THE AUTHOR OF "Praying With Fire" (Vols. 1 & 2)
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Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH: HODU

The Eternal Nation

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

O seed of Israel, His servant, O children of Yaakov, His chosen ones... Remember His covenant forever... Then He established it for Yaakov as a statute, for Israel as an everlasting covenant... He let no man rob them, and He rebuked kings for their sake: 'Dare not touch My anointed ones...

זרע ישראל עבדו, בני יעקב
בחירו... זכרו לעולם בריתו...
ויעמידה ליעקב לחק, לישראל
ברית עולם... לא הניח לאיש
לעשקם, ויוכח עליהם מלכים
אל תגעו במשיחי...
...אל תגעו במשיחי...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



Siach Yitzchok explains that the Jewish people are distinguished by two unique virtues. The first is their **heritage and connection with their Forefathers**. זרע ישראל refers to that link. The second is that they themselves are בני יעקב בחירו, the **children of Yaakov, His chosen ones**: "For you are a holy people to Hashem, your G-d; Hashem, your G-d, has chosen you to be for Him a treasured people above all the peoples that are on the face of the earth" (Devarim 7:6).

The Hebrew word for "**treasured people**" is "**am segulah**." Rashi (Shemos 19:5) explains that "*segulah*," means something precious, a treasure that one protects under lock and key. It describes G-d's relationship towards His people, who are kept under Divine protection. *Rabbeinu Bachye* (Ibid) adds that just as a king's most precious treasures are not given to a third person to protect, but remain under his own personal control, the Jewish nation, unlike the other nations of the world, is under Hashem's "personal protection."

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Hashem's Promise of Protection

We thank G-d for **protecting the Jewish nation** by invoking Hashem's everlasting covenant and His warning, "Dare not touch My anointed ones."

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

The Miracle of Jewish Survival

In 1899, the essayist Mark Twain wrote of his objective observations of a unique phenomenon in the history of the world – the enduring strength of the Jewish people. This was, of course, even before the Holocaust brought the miracle of survival to a whole new level.

"...Great and influential powers such as Egypt and Persia rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded and passed away; the Greeks and the Romans followed, and made their impact, and they are gone; others have held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they are no longer of import.

The Jew has seen them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. Many have wondered, what is the secret of his immortality?"

The secret is G-d's promise to Avraham: "And I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great ..." The realization of this promise throughout history is clear **proof of Hashem's Divine guidance**. Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein would often refer to this miracle as it was expressed by Rav Yaakov Emden in the introduction to his *siddur*:

"One who thinks about the fact that we [the

Jewish People] are standing in exile and cling to God between nations who persecute us and cause us trouble, recognizes the great wonder that we have survived since the destruction of the Holy Temple until today. To me, this miracle is greater than all miracles and wonders that God performed in Egypt and when He redeemed us from servitude and split the Reed Sea and all the other miracles."

Each episode of Jewish history features dramatic tales of Divine intervention, steadfast *emunah* and moral courage that have foiled every effort to silence the Torah's voice in the world. Rather than being nullified by the cultures of exile, Jews have planted Torah wherever they have dwelled. Often, after a period of persecution, one can see clearly how Hashem had laid the groundwork for survival decades or centuries before the threat arose.

The vast Torah world that has flourished in America is but one more dramatic chapter in the miraculous saga of the Jewish People. In little more than half a century after near-total devastation, we can witness with our own eyes a **rebirth that defies all odds and expectations**. God's Hand is there, apparent as daylight, to anyone who wishes to see it.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Connections to Eternity

Miriam lights the candles on Friday night for the first time. It's her first Shabbos as a married woman. She adds her lights to those of her mother, who has been lighting for the past 25 years, following in the footsteps of Miriam's grandmother, her great-grandmother, and so forth, in an unbroken chain spanning



the centuries. She says the same blessing they said. She sighs the same sigh of contentment, reaches for her *siddur* and sings the same words of "*Lecha Dodi*," that have traveled intact from the Tzfas of the 16th century through the Europe of

her ancestors, into her own American suburban home. She flashes for a moment on the future – as yet a far-off vision – in which her own daughter will light her own, first Shabbos candles.

There will always be Shabbos in the world, because there will always be Jews. G-d promises it will always be so. Connected to the Eternal through Torah and mitzvos, it is inevitable that the Jewish people, too, **will endure forever**.

Try This!

Imagine being immortal. Even though you could be injured, you would always recover and live on. Now imagine that the key to your immortality was to follow the directions of a wise man who knew **the secret of eternal life**. "Stick with me and I will never let you down," he says. How careful you would be to follow his advice. How grateful you would be that he picked you for this rare privilege. How brave you would be in the face of danger, knowing that you will always survive. That is the Jewish people and our relationship with G-d, and that is what we give thanks for in these *tefillas*.

Did You Know

► **Despite Distraction**

Last week, we discussed the **importance of kavannah** in *Pesukei D'Zimrah*, noting that this element is so essential that the *Pri Megadim* advises against holding an object in one's hand while saying these prayers, lest one become distracted.

However, there are times when a person who is required to say the whole *Pesukei D'Zimrah* may be in a situation which is not conducive to kavannah. For example, Reuven, when caring for Shimon who is ill, may find he has difficulty maintaining kavannah and is distracted. Rav Chaim Kanievsky (She'ailas Rav, Chapter 3, Question 5) rules that in such a situation, Reuven should not omit sections of *Pesukei D'zimrah* because of concern about lack of kavannah. Rather, he should recite the entire *Pesukei D'zimrah*.