

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH: HODU

Give Thanks

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

The heavens will be glad... Give thanks to Hashem for He is good, for His kindness endures forever....

ישמחו השמים...
הודו לה' כי טוב,
כי לעולם חסדו....

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



The root of the word לעולם (forever) is נעלם which means “hidden” (Rav Schwab On Prayer, page 142). In today’s world, Hashem’s goodness is sometimes hidden. As a result, giving thanks to Hashem for everything may be difficult, because we may not comprehend that all that occurs truly emanates from Hashem’s eternal kindness. In the future, during the time of Mashiach, when all of Hashem’s goodness is evident, G-d’s creations will rejoice and the whole world will say הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו - “Give thanks to Hashem for He is good, for His kindness endures forever.”

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Goodness Without Limits

Hashem’s goodness is complete and forever.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Wiping Out the Debts

All that Hashem does is for man’s good. However, in times of challenge and difficulty, a person may feel that the inflictions are painful and therefore he can only recite the blessing reserved for acceptance of G-d’s judgment – “Blessed are You... the true Judge.” In the future, however, when Mashiach arrives, the same person will be able to clearly see that all that occurred was for good. Then he will be able to make the blessing on happy occurrences—“Blessed are You... Who is good and does good.”

This notion is compared to bankruptcy, in which a bankrupt business pays just ten cents

of each dollar he owes. As difficult as they may be, **suffering and misfortune in this world are the easy payment plan** enabling us to erase our debt in this world at a rate far more favorable than that which would apply in the next world.

That is why Yitzchak Avinu, who understood the gravity of punishment in the next world, **preferred enduring the punishments in this world.** G-d indeed caused Yitzchak to become blind in his final years, thereby granting his request for suffering during his lifetime in place of punishment in the World to Come.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Who Knows What’s Good?

Sometimes in life, we are fortunate to see how “good” came out of something that at the time seemed “bad,” as the following story illustrates:

In the 1930s, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky was Rav of a small, 60-family community in a town called Tzitevian. His family lived in dire poverty and could not even afford a suit for his son Binyamin’s bar mitzvah.

Unable to subsist on the income he earned, Rav Yaakov applied over the course of several years for rabbinical positions in larger towns. The last one for which he applied was in Wilkomer, the third largest Jewish community



in Lithuania. After several interviews, Rav Yaakov was offered the position. He returned home to tell his wife the great news, and the household erupted in jubilation; finally their crushing poverty would be alleviated.

Three weeks later, the jubilation turned to grief when Rav Yaakov received news that the position had gone to someone else. The Rebbetzin cried bitter tears over the loss of the rabbanus in Wilkomer, recognizing that it virtually ensured that Rav Yaakov would have to travel

overseas to America by ship to seek some means of support.

“The failure to win that position, as well as the others profoundly affected Rav Yaakov’s own strong sense of Divine Providence. The successful candidates and their families eventually [fell into the hands of] the Nazis. In counseling people undergoing difficult tests, Rav Yaakov would often point to his own experience as an example of how that which is perceived at the moment as the greatest tragedy may, with the passage of time, be revealed to be the greatest salvation.”

(Paraphrased from Reb Yaakov, *The Life and Times of HaGaon Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky* (Yonason Rosenblum, ArtScroll, p. 99)).

Try This!

▶ In every person’s life, there are disappointments that later reveal themselves to be tremendous mercies from Hashem. Think of one such situation in your life – how disappointed you were when things didn’t go your way, and how much you have gained as a result in the long-run. Focus on that gain, and take a moment to truly relish it. Recall that moment when you say the words “כי לעולם חסדו” in davening this week.

Did You Know

▶ **Follow Your Custom**

There are two different customs regarding when in Shacharis one should recite Hodu. According to nusach Sefard, Hodu precedes Baruch She’amar. According to nusach Ashkenaz, Baruch She’amar precedes Hodu. Many authorities rule that (other than the chazzan) one should follow one’s personal custom, even when praying in a minyan that follows a different custom (Laws of Daily Living, Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen, ArtScroll, p. 287).