

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

BARUCH SHE'AMAR

Shades of Praise

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

We shall laud You, Hashem our G-d, with praises and song. We shall exalt You, praise you, glorify You... O Unique One, Life-giver of the worlds, King Whose great Name is eternally praised and glorified...

נהללך ה' אלקינו בשבחות,  
ובזמירות, ונגדלך,  
ונשבחך, ונפאריך... יחיד  
חי העולמים, מלך משבח  
ומפאריך, עדי עד שמו  
הגדול...

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the word

According to *Eitz Yosef*, each word from בשבחות thru שמו הגדול refers to a different way to extol Hashem in the morning prayers. See Insight for the meaning of these words of Baruch She'amar.

**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

*So Much to Say*

There are many aspects of our praise to Hashem.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

*Never Redundant*

Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, writes that Kabbalistic literature teaches that the letters of the Aleph-Beis were created before anything else. Through the use of these letters, Hashem created all the worlds (See "Insight," Newsletter 48). This is the hidden meaning of the first phrase in the Torah (Bereishis 1:1) "In the beginning G-d created ...את השמים." Hashem's first act was to create the Hebrew letters from א thru ת.

The 22 sacred letters of the Hebrew alphabet are profound spiritual forces. When G-d combined them into words and phrases, they brought about creation. When we utter the letters of the sacred alphabet and combine them into different words, we too tap into the profound spirituality that these words possess. That is why man's first exercise of his mastery occurred when G-d asked him to name all the creatures of the new universe (Bereishis 2:19, Ramban, Bereishis 2:20). The name by which man called each living creature remained its name, and each of these names reflected that entity's essence (*Ohr Gedalyahu, Shemos, p. 2*).

Once we appreciate the sanctity of every letter and word, we can understand the purpose of articulating every word of a prayer, even when some words may appear redundant. *Chida* explains that the combination of letters that make up the words in prayers have the power to arouse spiritual forces beyond our imagination. But to activate these forces, we must articulate the words. By intertwining the power of the sacred aleph-beis with the power of prayer, we tap into the spiritual roots of the sacred letters, thereby moving the world toward salvation. (Adapted from "The Wisdom In the Hebrew Alphabet," Rabbi Michael L. Munk, ArtScroll, Pages 20-22.) Thus, each word of praise in Boruch She'amar attaches to its own powerful spiritual source.

Baruch She'amar is the opening blessing for Pesukei D'Zimrah. The words from Baruch

She'amar noted below refer to different parts of the Shacharis davening (*Eitz Yosef*).

בשבחות (with praises)- This refers to מזמור לתודה which is a wondrous praise. In the time of the Beis HaMikdash, people would bring a korban תודה, a thanksgiving offering (Vayikra 7:12) when they survived a life-threatening situation. Midrash (Tanchuma, Emor 14) states that after Mashiach arrives, all the voluntary private animal sacrifices in the Holy Temple will cease. Only the *korban Todah* will remain. Similarly, all personal prayers and requests will cease, except for prayers of thanksgiving.

בזמירות (and songs)- This refers to Pesukei D'Zimrah.

נגדלך (we shall exalt You)- This refers to Shiras Hayam said in Az Yashir. See Shemos (14:21), "On that day, Hashem saved Israel from the hand of Egypt... Israel saw the 'great hand' that Hashem inflicted..."

ישתבח (praise You)- This refers to נשבחך.

גלו (glorify You)- This refers to the verse in תהלה המאורוה which states 'המה יפארוך'.

נמליכך (proclaim Your reign)- This refers to accepting the "yoke of heaven," עול מלכות שמים קריאת שמע in.

זכיר שמך (mention Your Name)- This refers to כי בשם קדשך הגדול as we recite the words 'יקרבתנו מלכנו לשמך' and 'זכיר שמך'.

יחיד חי העולמים (O Unique One, Life-giver of the worlds)- This refers to Shemoneh Esrei, recited to the Unique One.

מלך משבח ומפאריך (King who is praised and glorified)- This refers to תהלה לדוד which is said three times a day.

עדי עד שמו הגדול (eternally His great Name)- This refers to the *Kedusha* included in Uva Letzion, recited after Shemoneh Esrei.

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

*Captured in Words*

When Aaron's mother passed away at the ripe old age of 95, he was charged with the duty of delivering a eulogy on behalf of the five siblings. He spoke to his sisters and brothers and tried to capture in words the profound, varied and seemingly unquantifiable goodness of their mother. Nothing Aaron could think of seemed to convey the totality of the picture. Ultimately, he realized that he could never explain in the course of ten or fifteen minutes – perhaps not even in the course of a lifetime – what his mother had meant



to her family, friends and all those who knew her.

Therefore, he tried to categorize her praises. As a mother, she was loving, positive, encouraging and energetic. She never ceased praying for her children's welfare, even when they were already grandparents. As a wife, she was supportive, warm, helpful, organized, committed to her family's spiritual well-being, and always up-beat when difficult times arose. As a school secretary for several decades, she had another list

of accolades to describe her endless efforts on the students' and teachers' behalf. Just to say she was a good, kind, holy woman would have done her injustice, and yet, nothing Aaron could say would have been enough.

Likewise, we must praise Hashem. We try to praise Hashem. But anything we can say describes only a shard of the brilliance that emanates from His holy Being into our lives. Still, in order to feel His presence and appreciate His kindness, we must resort to words, and thus our prayers provide us with the words to use that will open our eyes and hearts, and let us perceive His greatness.

**Try This!**

Imagine a ladder to Heaven. Each word of praise to Hashem brings you one step higher, and a praise said with deep emotion lifts you hundreds of rungs higher. Picture this ascent as you recite each phrase of praise in Boruch She'amar; set yourself flying!

**Did You Know**

► *Holding One's Tzitzis*

When reciting שומר ברך a man should hold the tzitzis of the two front corners of his tallis (or tallis katan). Upon concluding ברך he should kiss the tzitzis (Mishneh Berurah 51:1).