

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH: HODU

Praise Is Our Purpose

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

And say, 'Save us, O G-d of our salvation, gather us and rescue us from the nations, **to thank Your Holy Name and to glory in Your praise!**'...and let the entire people say, 'Amen'...

ואמרו הושיענו אלקי ישענו.
וקבצנו והצילנו מן הגוים.
להדות לשם קדשך,
להשתבח בתהלתך
...ויאמרו כל העם אמן....

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

King David commanded all those assembled who heard this mizmor to say אמן which is an affirmation of the truth. אמן is an acronym of the words "E-l Melech Ne'eman — G-d, the faithful King." Therefore, when one responds to a blessing with the word "אמן," he is affirming this belief.



THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Opportunity to Praise Hashem

Thank and praise Him endlessly for His kindness.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

A Higher Reason to Pray

It's natural for a believing Jew to pray to Hashem to fulfill his needs and rescue him from his troubles. It's a basic aspect of *emunah*: when we pray to Hashem regarding these matters, we show that we know He controls everything and is the source of everything we need. Our prayers confirm our sense of Hashem's presence and build our feeling of closeness to Him. In fact, **this is the very purpose of the challenges Hashem puts in our lives.**

But what place do prayers of praise have in the scheme of things? Does Hashem need our praise? Are we trying to pander to Him before we come in with our big requests?

Praise does not benefit Hashem. It benefits us, by bringing us to think about all that Hashem does for us, putting these thoughts into words and letting them have an impact on our hearts. **By acknowledging Hashem's kindness, we instill in ourselves the certainty that He cares for us and loves us.** It is another route, a gentler and more pleasant route, to coming close to Hashem. In addition, through our praise and love, we make Hashem beloved in the world, which is the mission for which He chose the Jewish people.

By reciting בתהלתך לשם קדשך ... בתהלתך we re-affirm that we should praise Hashem for the good that we receive.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Just to Get Closer

A child falls down and skins his knee. Soon he is weeping on his father's lap while the father cleans the cut and puts a bandage over it. The father soothes the child. The tears quickly dry up and the child scrambles off his father's lap to continue playing. But before he runs off, he turns to his father, gives him a hug and says, "Thank you, Daddy. You made it all better!"

It's a normal scenario. Any child in trouble or pain would turn to his parents for help, and once the help has come,



the child would feel grateful.

Now consider a different scenario. A father is sitting at the kitchen table drinking his coffee. His young child walks in, says good morning and then snuggles up on his father's lap and says, "I love you, Daddy. You always keep me safe and make things good for me."

The second child is not moved by need. He is moved by pure love – by the desire to reaffirm his closeness with his

father. While the first child's expression of gratitude is appropriate and valuable, the second is priceless.

When we pray to Hashem out of need, we are indeed coming close to Him. We are responding appropriately to the challenges He has sent us, which are after all only a means to prod us to reach out to Him.

When we praise Hashem from sheer gratitude, however, without any pressing need to motivate us, we go beyond the first kind of prayer. We testify that our only real, pressing need is to reaffirm our closeness to Him and revel in His presence.

Try This!

▶ The words of this prayer acknowledge that Hashem has saved us and rescued us, giving us reason to praise him. When you say these words this week, keep in mind that you are praising Hashem for saving your ancestors from the ravages of their times as well.

Did You Know

▶ *Understanding Our Custom*

In last week's "Did You Know" section, we mentioned that 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. What is the basis for the different customs? This week we will focus on nusach Ashkenaz. Next week we will focus on nusach Sefard.

The Mechaber (Siman 51:1) states, 'One should say the blessing Baruch She'amar before he says the Pesukei D'Zimrah and the blessing Yishtabach after he has said them.' Thus, it appears that Boruch She'amar is said before all of Pesukei D'Zimrah, including Hodu. The Levush and Tur agree. Further, Mishneh Berurah (Ibid:1) explains that Baruch She'amar was ordained to be said by the men of the Great Assembly, based on a tablet on which the prayer was written, that fell from Heaven. The words on the tablet also suggested that Pesukei D'Zimrah begin with Baruch She'amar.