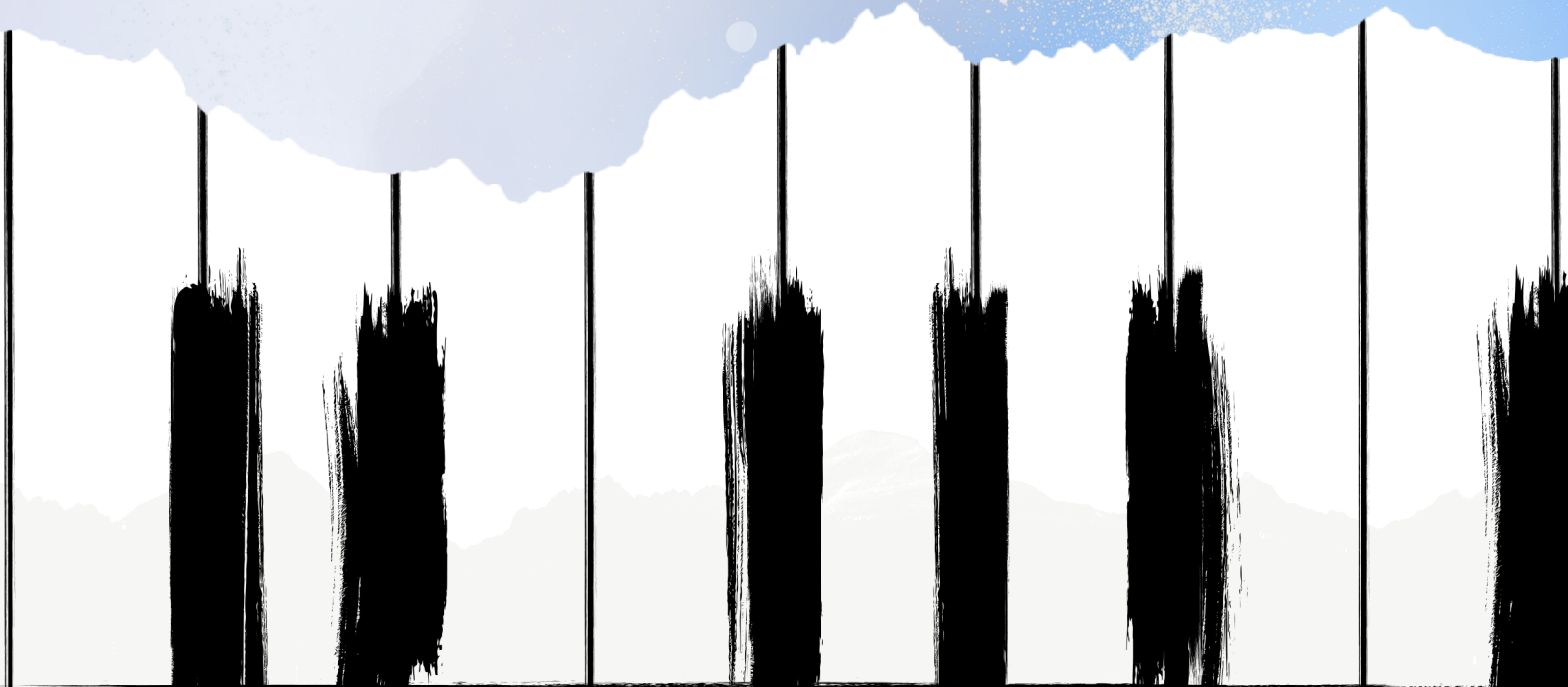


לואדם מערבו לב
ומה' מענה לשון



פסוקה הזמרה

*A comprehensive Tefillah resource
for Grades 6-12*



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Dear Teacher,

We are pleased to share with you this Pesukei D'Zimrah Curriculum for grades 6–12, designed to enrich your students' understanding and connection to one of the most beautiful and powerful parts of tefillah.

Pesukei D'Zimrah is far more than a warm-up before Shacharis. It is a carefully structured series of praises that helps prepare our minds and hearts to stand before the Ribbono Shel Olam.

Through words of Tehillim and other pesukim, Chazal give us the tools to focus, express hakaras hatov, and build a sense of awe and closeness to Hashem. For middle school students — as they mature emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually — this is an ideal time to begin developing deeper awareness and meaning in their tefillah.

This curriculum is intended to:

- Introduce the structure and flow of Pesukei D'Zimrah in an age-appropriate, engaging way.
- Highlight key themes such as gratitude, emunah, and Hashem's hashgachah in the world.
- Strengthen students' understanding of lashon hakodesh through vocabulary and context.
- Foster greater kavanah and personal connection to the words they say each morning.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful classroom discussion and reflection grounded in Torah hashkafah.

This resource is presented in a way that speaks to the hearts and minds of today's students. It is designed to support the meaningful avodah you already do in the classroom, offering ideas and tools to help bring Pesukei D'Zimrah to life in a way that resonates.

You are, of course, encouraged to adapt the materials to the unique needs and level of your talmidim or talmidos. Whether used regularly or occasionally, as part of tefillah time or as enrichment, we hope this curriculum will help inspire a stronger connection to tefillah and a deeper awareness of Hashem's presence in our daily lives.

Please note: This resource comes along with an add-on option of easy-to-use translation sheets for each tefilla. You can choose to have your students use these alongside your lessons so they can have a quick grasp of the words' meanings without first dictating translation or fill-in-the-blanks monotony.

Thank you for your dedication and your continued efforts in chinuch.

Torah Umesorah Teacher Center



הקדמה לפסוקי דזמרה

IN THIS INTRODUCTION

1. חשיבות התפילה
The importance of the tefilla
2. מבנה התפילה
The structure of the tefilla
3. תוכן פסוקי דזמרה ואופן אמירתם
The content of Pesukei D'zimrah and the proper way to recite it

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

R' Nosson Wachtfogel zt"l would lament the fact that many people do not properly value the tefillos of Pesukei D'zmira and even skip these special tefillos sometimes, choosing instead to focus on Birchos Hashachar, Krias Shema, and Shemoneh Esrei as the 'main' parts of davening.

He said that it is important to invest time and effort in teaching our students the meaning and content of Pesukei D'zimrah so that they can connect and appreciate the opportunity to daven them properly.

The overarching themes expressed in Pesukei D'zimrah are the praise of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the enumeration of His infinite kindness, and the recognition of all the good that He gives us. Through focusing on these ideas, we can come to open our hearts and minds to be able to concentrate on the climax of tefilla: Shemoneh Esrei.

Who should we ask our requests of, if not the Only One Who has the power and desire to fulfill them?

According to this, R' Wachtfogel would explain the possuk

"לאדם מערכי לב ומה' מענה לשון"

The "מערכי לב" - having kavana in davening—has to come from a person's own effort, and this is referring to Pesukei D'zimrah.

As a result of our efforts to open our hearts with gratitude to Hashem during Pesukei D'zimrah, we can get to the "מה' מענה לשון" — the siyata dishmaya that Hashem will grant us for the continuation of our tefilla (i.e. Shemoneh Esrei). As we say in the beginning of Shemoneh Esrei: "ה' שפתי תפתח".

Though we can't discount the necessity of putting our own effort and kavana into Shemoneh Esrei as well, it is clear that the foundation of that kavana begins during Pesukei D'zimrah and sets the tone for the rest of our davening.

INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS ANTICIPATORY SET

An Israeli Baal Teshuva relates:

When I was in the Israeli army, I was a military tank operator. During the Yom Kippur War (1973), my battalion and I were sent to the frontlines of the battle in the Sinai Desert, close to the Egyptian border. Our division was made up of tens of powerful military tanks, and our job was to attack the opposing army base that was full of Egyptian soldiers.

The Egyptians fought back valiantly and started shooting at our tanks with frightening precision. The tanks started to explode in front of our very eyes. The smoke was blinding, the screams were bloodcurdling, and we feared for our lives.

Our tank commander, a completely secular Israeli, saw where things were headed and called out in desperation, "Does anyone here know of a prayer that we can say to ask G-d to save our lives?!"

His request was met with silence. None of us secular Israeli soldiers were familiar with any such prayer.

One soldier spoke up hesitantly.

He knew of one prayer, but had no idea if it was at all related to this type of life-threatening situation. It was a blessing, he explained, called "שהכל נהיה בדברו".

The tank commander carefully enunciated the words of the bracha, slowly and fervently.

Our entire tankful of soldiers repeated after him.

Every time the Egyptians shot in our direction, we all screamed out the words of the bracha, clinging to them like the lifelines we were sure they were.

Slowly but surely, the tide started to turn and we were successful in destroying tank after tank of Egyptians. Miraculously, we concluded our mission successfully and returned back to base, unharmed.

THE BOTTOM LINE

How powerful are the timeless words of tefilla, even when recited ignorantly, even out of context! How beautiful, the complete and utter reliance on Hakdosh Baruch Hu. And how much more so, the tefillos of תינוקות של בית רבן, when we open our siddurim and daven with kavana and a deeper understanding of the words we're saying.

OPTIONAL

Choose a few students to bring in stories from their own family history showcasing the power of tefilla. (You can even choose to compile these into a small, meaningful pamphlet to distribute to the class.)

חשיבות התפילה

SECTION ONE

ANTICIPATORY SET

Post a bold 'Caution: Danger!' sign on the board. Ask students for input as to what kinds of danger this type of sign might be alluding to.

Most of the answers given will refer to valid types of hazards, such as: Unfinished construction, wild animals, electrical activity, unsafe property, etc. Compile a list of the shared answers on the board.

Next, post various pictures of non-threatening items on the board: Teddy bear, water bottle, jack-in-the-box, pillow, telephone, etc. Ask students if any of the posted items seem to pose a threat that should be included in the list of possible hazards. Upon hearing their negative responses, challenge them with the following questions:

What if I told you that contained within one of these seemingly innocuous items is a small but powerful explosive device? Why would this item then become even more dangerous than all the previous hazards that we listed?

CONCLUSION

Hazards that are known to be dangerous pose less of a threat than hazards hiding in plain sight in the form of innocent, everyday items. This is because we know in advance to guard ourselves from the former, while the latter give us no cause for concern or advance warning.

Shlomo Hamelech, the חכם מכל אדם — the wisest man that ever walked the face of the planet, the one who was able to understand the language of every living creature—writes a warning in קהלת.

"שמור רגלך כאשר תלך אל בית האלקים" - *Be careful when you go to the house of Hashem, i.e. shul.*
(קהלת, ד:יז)

Q: Tefilla is our most powerful 'weapon' and the way that we connect with our Creator. What kind of danger could possibly be awaiting us when we daven?

As with any time we do a mitzvah, the שטן and various מזיקים (destructive 'מלאכים') try to prevent us from fulfilling our lofty goals of attaining kedusha. These forces are trying to 'block' our tefillos from ascending and being accepted by Hashem. Our tefillos have a long, difficult way to go before they are successfully accepted in שמים and are able to reach all the way up to the כסא הכבוד.

Hence, it is a spiritual, ruchniyus-type of danger that Shlomo Hamelech is warning us about in Koheles. By being aware of the 'danger' in advance, we can prepare ourselves more adequately to bypass the danger and ensure the success of our tefillos.

Q: Just like we would prepare ourselves properly to encounter a physical form of danger, we must learn how to 'arm' ourselves to confront this spiritual kind of danger. **How can we ensure that our tefillos bypass these 'obstructive forces' and מזיקים and are able achieve their intended purposes?**

The possuk in איכה says: (איכה ג:מד) 'סכותה בענן לך מעבור תפילה' The word סכותה has the same root as the word סכך, and means 'protection.' (Just like the סכך is the 'protection' on top of a succah.) This possuk is telling us **that there is a way** to protect our tefillos from the ominous 'clouds' of obstruction and harmful מזיקים. How, indeed?

The words פסוקי דזמרה contain a double meaning:

1. (לזמר) - לשון שיר (לזמר), an expression of music and praise (תוכן התפילות - content of the tefillos)
2. (לזמור) - לשון חתוך (לזמור), to prune and cut away (מטרת התפילות - goal of the tefillos). This second meaning teaches us that saying Pesukei D'zimrah properly can 'cut away' the מזיקים and prevent them from hindering the rest of our tefillos.



The letters of the aleph-bais that follow the letters ז, מ, ר are ש, נ, ח:

ז - ח, מ - נ, ר - ש

The נחש הקדמוני, יצר הרע (snake) symbolizes negativity in this world (נחש).

Pesukei D'zimrah is our antidote to the destructiveness of the נחש.

THE BOTTOM LINE

By saying the tefillos of Pesukei D'zimrah properly, we can 'arm' ourselves and prepare our tefillos to be able to bypass all the dangers along their way up to the כסא הכבוד.

מבנה התפילה

SECTION TWO

Q: Which tefillos are included in Pesukei D'zimrah?

(Have students look in their siddurim to find and suggest the correct tefillos)

הודו לד' קראו בשמו, ברוך שאמר, מזמור לתודה, יהי כבוד, אשרי, 'הללוקות', ויברך דוד, אז ישיר, ישתבח

All of these tefillos, as part of Pesukei D'zimra, are united under the same general concept and contain one unified running thread, though perhaps with varied messages and methods.

תוכן פסוקי ד'זמרה ואופן אמירתם SECTION THREE

The section of Pesukei D'zimrah is, so to speak, the bridge that transports us from ברכות השחר to the 'main' part of tefilla: Krias Shema and Shemoneh Esrei.

דרש ר' שמלאי לעולם יסדר אדם שבחו של הקב"ה ואחר כך יתפלל' (מסכת ברכות לב)

R' Simlai teaches: A person should first say his praises to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and then he can daven.

The segment of davening that contains Pesukei D'zimrah is the like the entryway to tefilla. Like we say in התודה - 'באו שעריו' - Come into His gates. How? -with thanks.

This concept of praising and thanking Hashem before requesting of Him can be illustrated to your students with the following demonstration:

You purchased a rather costly dress from one of the clothing stores in your area. To your dismay, after your very first time wearing it, the dress was completely damaged—numerous threads got pulled and unraveled, and the material already started to show signs of pilling. You head directly back to the store where you purchased the dress, intending to demand a complete refund or at least store credit. There are two different ways you can interact with the salesperson at the counter. (Choose two students to come up and act out the two different scenarios.)

Scenario #1: 'Hi, I bought this dress here last week. I only wore it once and the material is completely damaged! You should know, it's not the first time that I was disappointed with an item that I purchased in your store. Please credit my account with the full refund for this dress. It's really not acceptable.'

Scenario #2: 'Hi, how are you? Firstly, I just wanted to let you know how comfortable I feel shopping in your store. Your service is always so personal and reliable, so thank you very much. I was wondering: I purchased this dress here last week and the material got ruined after my first time wearing it. You're always so accommodating with returns and refunds—is there any way you can credit my account with the full refund for this item?'

Which interaction is more likely to end with a successful return and refund?

THE BOTTOM LINE

Such is the power of Psukei D'zimrah. We first praise and thank Hashem for all that He does, and only then do we progress to the בקשה stage of tefilla with our recitation of Shemoneh Esrei.

ONE LAST POINT

The fact that these tefillos are our 'entrance' to the gates of tefilla requires that they be recited with joy and jubilation. We are entering the 'palace' of Hakadosh Baruch Hu! When in the presence of royalty, one must conduct oneself with joy and happiness. Like the מלך said to נחמיה:

(נחמיה ב:ב) "מדוע פניך רעים היום ואתה אינך חולה?" - "Why does your face look upset today? You're not sick!"

While reciting Pesukei D'zimrah we should allow ourselves to feel the security of Hashem's constant presence, the comfort of His never-ending רחמנות, and His all-encompassing ability to supervise every detail in the lives of every one of His creations at all times. If we steer clear of 'lip service' and truly allow ourselves to feel these sentiments, the joy and jubilation will automatically follow.

CONCLUDING DEMONSTRATION

ACTIVITY

Choose a student to come up to the front of the classroom. Hand her a matchbox and instruct her to place one of the matches on her palm. With no difficulty at all, she should be able to take out a match and place it on her palm. Upon seeing the safe outcome, challenge the class:

Why didn't she get hurt? She just placed a match on her palm!

Upon hearing the obvious response (the match wasn't lit), strike that same match against the side of the matchbox to ignite it. Hold it out to student once more and ask her to place it on her palm. Quite obviously, she will refuse.

What's the difference? In this case, the match was lit and would have a burning effect on her skin.

Our recitation of Pesukei D'zimrah should not resemble that unlit, ineffective matchstick. Rather, our goal when saying these praises of Hakadosh Baruch Hu should be to 'ignite' within ourselves true feelings of gratitude to Him for all that He does—in a way that will actually impact us and 'light' ourselves up with happiness, calm, and content. A dry recitation of these tefillos will not elicit this response—only an activated, 'ignited' Pesukei D'zimrah will get us where we want to go.

הודו לה' קראו בעמו

הודו is a tefilla containing many pesukim culled from a variety of different sources in Tanach. This introduction lends background and framework to these pesukim to enrich your understanding before teaching the tefilla.

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

This tefilla of הודו is very lengthy and complex. To keep your students engaged throughout, consider creating a 'Thank You Hashem' booklet. At the beginning or end of each tefilla lesson, have students fill out cards or tickets describing something specific that they thanked Hashem for since the last lesson. You can choose a few girls each time to read their submissions to the class, and then collect all the cards. At the conclusion of your lessons on the tefilla of הודו, you can distribute a beautiful booklet with a compilation of the best submissions. If this idea doesn't speak to you, consider another ongoing project that can bring uniformity and excitement to all of the הודו lessons.

MAP

As some of the students may find it hard to follow the flow of the pesukim, it is important for you to start your lesson with a basic outline of the 3 main parts of the tefillah. A 'Map of הודו'. This map is just to give them a clear overview. The information contained in the following chart will be explained in more depth later on in the lesson.

MAP OF HODU

חלק א'	חלק ב'	חלק ג'
פסוקים בזמן תנ"ך	פסוקים בזמן תנ"ך	פסוקים בזמן תנ"ך
'הודו לד' - ולנביאי אל תרעו'	'שירו לד' - ויאמרו כל העם'	'רוממו ה' אלקינו' - כי גמל עלי'
Pesukim of praise that were said when the ארון was returned	Pesukim of praise that were said when the ארון was returned	Pesukim culled from a variety of sources in Tanach
קרוב תמיד של	קרוב תמיד בין	Added during שני בית when the ארון was brought up to Yerushalayim.
שחרית	הערביים	נגזר

SOURCE IN TANACH

From 'ויאמרו כל העם אמן' through 'הודו לה' קראו בשמו':

These pesukim are from דברי הימים פרק ט"ז, pesukim that were said by B'nei Yisroel at the time that the ארון was brought up to Yerushalayim.



In the time period before the building of the Beis Hamikdash, the משכן was located in שילה and therein lay the ארון. When the פלישתים came to fight against בני"י, it was apparent that their army was strong and powerful. The זקני ישראל decided to bring the ארון out to the battlefield to serve as an added זכות for בני"י to be victorious in the war. In spite of this, the פלישתים celebrated an overwhelming victory. In addition to killing 30,000 of בני"י, they took the ארון into captivity.

For the duration of the time that the ארון was with the פלישתים, the five כלשתי cities suffered many debilitating and embarrassing מכות and afflictions. It became so unbearable that, finally, the פלישתי elders decided to return the ארון to בני"י via cow-driven wagon. They intended it to be an experiment: If the cows drove the wagon toward בית שמש, the closest Jewish city, it would be proof positive that all the suffering inflicted on the פלישתים was a punishment for taking the ארון captive.

So it was. The cows headed in the direction of בית שמש. In 'וישרנה הפרות בדרך'. In recognition of this great chessed, ד' sang שירה to בני"י. This שירה was comprised of the opening pesukim in הודו קראו בשמו' of הודו.

Finally, the ארון was brought to קרית יערים, where it remained in the house of אבינדב.

The pesukim in דברי הימים describe how the rest of the events unfolded:

After three months of the ארון staying in the home of אדום הגתי in קרית יערים, the ארון was finally transported back up to ירושלים and into the special אהל that was prepared specifically for the purpose of housing it.

At the time that the ארון was being brought back to ירושלים, Dovid Hamelech instructed אסף and his brothers to thank Hashem for this great z'chus. At this time, the 'שירת הפרות' was sung, comprised of these pesukim in הודו. These pesukim were repeated before the ארון for the next 43 years.

When Shlomo Hamelech built the Beis Hamikdash and the ארון was brought inside, these pesukim would be said at the time that a קרבן תמיד was brought. One part was recited during the שחרית של תמיד and the second during the הערביים של תמיד.

THE UNDERLYING MESSAGE

What is the underlying message in this tefilla?

When we start saying Pesukei D'zimrah and we open with these pesukim of 'הודו לד' קראו בשמו', we need to understand that the foundation for all praise to Hashem—and specifically this tefilla—is the recognition that nothing in this world happens by chance. This is also the basis for all the הודיה that we give to Hashem for everything that happens to us. Everything is from Hashem and there is no such thing as טבע!

How do all these events bring out this underlying message?

The tefilla opens with the words, 'הודו לד' קראו בשמו הודיעו בעמים עלילותינו'. We should praise Hashem and tell all his 'עלילות'—what are עלילות? Rashi says that עלילות is referring to all the tragedies that befell the ארון as a result of their taking the ארון.

The sefer שיח יצחק brings a פירוש הגר"א that says: Any time there is a monumental 'natural' event (an earthquake, tsunami, hurricane, etc.), we need to strengthen our emunah and be sure to recognize that it's not 'nature' that is behind the event—everything is coming from Hashem, happening with His direct השגחה פרטית.

About someone who believes in the inherent power of טבע, the possuk says: 'אני ד' נאמן ליפרע'—I am Hashem Who is trustworthy to punish. In other words, this person will get the punishment that is coming to him.

This עבודה of recognizing that Hashem is behind all the happenings in this world and admitting to it is not only for Klal Yisroel—it is incumbent on the goyim to do so, as well. 'הודיעו בעמים עלילותינו'.

In these events of the ארון's captivity and subsequent return, the כלישתי officers understood that it was impossible to blame their afflictions and troubles on nature; everything had to be attributed to Hashem. Through them recognizing that the events were ordained בהשגחה פרטית and hearing the שירה that בני sang to Hashem, a tremendous kiddush Hashem evolved.

The unique idea presented here is that strengthening the recognition of השגחה פרטית is not only for us—it is also incumbent on the goyim. Based on this idea, we can understand the format of this tefilla:

The beginning of the tefilla is comprised of pesukim from ספר דברי הימים and is split into two:

חלק א'

Pesukim:

From the beginning of the tefilla until the words
ובנביאי אל תרעו

Content:

Making Hashem's name known and praising Him
amongst Klal Yisroel

Originally recited:

While the korban of שחרית של תמיד was being brought

חלק ב'

Pesukim:	From '...ויאמרו כל העם אמן' until 'שירו לד' כל הארץ'
Content:	Making Hashem's name known and praising Him amongst the goyim
Originally recited:	While the korban of הערביים של בין תמיד was being brought

SOURCE IN TANACH

אשירה לה' כי גמל עלי through רוממו ה' אלקנו From

These pesukim are compiled from a variety of sources in Tanach.

In this section of the tefillah, there are a total of 22 pesukim gathered from different sources. During בית שני there was no ארון (it was after ראשון נגזז to ensure that it would not fall into foreign hands). Despite this, the בית המקדש was still full of kedusha and בני"י continued to recite the pesukim that had originally been recited before the ארון. They also added these pesukim, the content of which is: praise to Hashem for his kindnesses with בני"י even whilst they are in galus (forgiving their aveiros, etc.), and requests for future חסד from Hashem.

חלק ג'

Pesukim:	From 'אשירה לד' כי גמל עלי' until 'רוממו ד' אלקנו'
Content:	A compilation of pesukim that talk about Hashem's kindness with us in every situation—even galus.
Originally recited:	Added to the recitation of pesukim during בית שני

הודו לה' קראו בעמו

IN THIS TEFILLAH

*We answer the question of
'Why הודו?'- What does it have
to do with me? Why do I, as a
student in today's day and age,
care about praising Hashem for
the ארון העדות and the nissim
that accompanied it throughout
the ages?*

ANTICIPATORY SET

Post three different pictures of dining room tables on the board. Attach a price tag to each. Give the students a few minutes to look at the tables and their prices, then discuss.

Which factors would contribute to the differences in these tables' prices?

The quality of the table, the material the table is made out of, the size of the table, the availability of the product, the style of the workmanship, etc.

Would it make sense for two seemingly identical tables to have different prices?

Usually not. If the product is exactly the same, the price should be exactly the same.

Unless...

If one item has some sort of significance to it that the other does not, even though they look identical, one will still cost more than the other. A historical artifact, an antique, or an item with a rich history may have a higher value than a later-edition version of the same exact product.

Example: A first-edition book that was printed in the early Jewish printing press of the Slavita brothers can be sold today for tens of thousands of dollars, while an identical book of a later version and newer printing will be much, much cheaper.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The keilim of the Mishkan hold inestimable worth in Klal Yisroel's eyes. How we wish we would be able to get a glimpse of just one of them!

The tefilla that we are about to learn was originally said in reference to one of the keilim of the Mishkan—the ארון העדות. When we daven these pesukim, we know 'ונשלמה פרים שפתינו'—it's like we are attaching ourselves to some vestiges of the kedusha of this כלי.

MAP

This tefillah is very long and complex. As some of the students may find it hard to follow the flow of the pesukim, it is important for you to start your lesson with a basic outline of the 3 main parts of the tefillah. A 'Map of הודו'. This is the map, just to give them a clear overview. The information contained in this chart will be explained in more depth later on in the lesson.

חלק ג'	חלק ב'	חלק א'	
'רוממו ה' אלקינו'- 'כי גמל עלי'	'שירו לד' - 'ויאמרו כל העם'	'הודו לד'- 'ולנביאי אל תרעו'	פסוקים
Pesukim culled from a variety of sources in Tanach	Pesukim of praise that were said when the ארון was returned	Pesukim of praise that were said when the ארון was returned	בזמן תנ"ך
Added during בני בית שני when the נגנז was ארון	Was said during the קרבן תמיד בין הערביים	Was said during the קרבן תמיד של שחרית	בבית"ק

The ארון contained the shattered pieces of the first set of luchos, along with the complete set of the לוחות שניות. It was located in the קודש הקדשים section of the משכן. The ארון was the most קדוש out of all the כלי המשכן, due to the kedusha of its contents—the luchos.

We can see the kedusha of this כלי from the following two midrashim that describe 2 specific נסים that happened with regard to the ארון העדות :

הנס הראשון

In the gemara, it says: 'מקום ארון אינו מן המידה והכרובים בנס היו עומדים'.

The dimensions of the ארון העדות were 20 אמות x 20 אמות. The dimensions of the קודש הקדשים were 2.5 אמות x 1.5 אמות.

Usually, placing an item with the ארון's dimensions in a space with the קודש הקדשים's dimensions would cause the available space in the קודש הקדשים to diminish somewhat—because some of the space would be taken up by the ארון.

Chazal tell us that even when the ארון was inside the קודש הקדשים, its dimensions remained 20 x 20 אמות! The ארון was there, but it was as if it didn't take up any physical space!

הנס העשני

Bnei Yisroel had to cross over the ירדן in order to enter ארץ ישראל. A נס happened, and the ירדן split—allowing them to cross with ease. That wasn't the only נס, though.

'להראות להם נס אחר נמצאו ארון וכהנים מצד אחד וישראל מצד אחר והירדן מלא ביניהם **נשא ארון את נושאי** ועבר שנאמר ויעבור ארון ד' לפני העם'

The job of transporting the ארון was entrusted to the Kohanim. When crossing the ירדן, the ארון lifted itself up, and carried with it all the Kohanim who had been previously carrying it! This is what it means when we say the ארון was 'נושא את נושאי' — it carried its carriers.

When the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, what happened to all the כלי המקדש? They were taken to בבל, as described in the following possuk:

'וכל כלי בית האלקים הגדולים והקטנים ואוצרות בית ד' ואוצרות המלך ושריו הכל הביא בבל' (דברי הימים ב לז:יח)

They were all taken to בבל — except the ארון. Because of its kedusha, it was given 'special treatment': 'דביר' — Shlomo Hamelech prepared a special area called the 'דביר' (מלכים א:ו) and that was where the ארון was placed.

'והכין אותו להיות שם ארון האלקים...כי בזה רמז אל הבנין שעשה שלמה תחת הקרקע לגנוז שם את ארון ד' לפי שהיה נודע שעתיד הבית הזה ליחרב'

Therefore, in the second Beis Hamikdash, a few things were missing that had been in the first one: the fire that used to descend from שמים, and the ארון העדות — it stayed hidden in this special place designated by Shlomo, and will stay there until ביאת גואל צדק.

What is the connection between the tefilla of הודו and the ארון העדות?

The pesukim in this tefilla were recited at the time that the קרבן תמיד of the morning and the afternoon were brought in the Beis Hamikdash.

They were originally said even before the Beis Hamikdash was built, with regard to the ארון העדות. The tefilla can be split into 3 parts:

Parts 1 and 2 were said at the time that ארון was returned from יערים to the משכן.

Part 3 was added during the era of the second Beis Hamikdash, when the ארון was not present, and is all about the kindnesses of Hashem toward Am Yisroel even when they are in galus.

Note: You can have the girls open their siddurim and show them the three parts of the tefilla as specified below.

חלק א'	חלק ב'	חלק ג'
'הודו לד' - 'ולנביאי אל תרעו'	'שירו לד' - 'ויאמרו כל העם'	'רוממו ה' אלקינו' - 'כי גמל עלי'
Pesukim of praise that were said when the ארון was returned	Pesukim of praise that were said when the ארון was returned	Pesukim culled from a variety of sources in Tanach
בזמן תנ"ך		
קרבן תמיד של שחרית	קרבן תמיד בין הערביים	Added during the בנין בית שני when the ארון נגנז
בבית"ק		

ANTICIPATORY SET

Post a mixture of advertisements on the board. They should all fit within one of the following categories:

1. Advertisements geared to a specific target audience- children's toys, teaching supplies, etc.
2. Seasonal advertisements- fall/winter clothing, summer swim gear, mishloach manos, etc.
3. Advertisements designed to pique the reader's interest- creative taglines, pictures, etc.

Do not tell the students the breakdown of the categories beforehand.

Choose 3 advertisements and post them in different columns on the board. Give the students some time to analyze the way you divided these three, and then have them attempt to categorize the rest of the advertisements following the same system of categorization.

After all the advertisements are categorized, discuss the pattern with the students. Ask them to give a title to each category using a question (*For Who? When? How?*).

Category 1. **Who** are you targeting?

Category 2. **When** would you put out these ads?

Category 3. **How** do these ads grab your attention?

Do you know how much money is poured into marketing and advertising annually? There are graphic artists, marketing specialists, publicists, and so many more jobs that are devoted to this area alone!

Why?

Businesses and companies realize the irrefutable power that good advertising has on consumers. Persistent, wide-spread, and smart marketing can have untold effects on an industry's sales and success.

If someone is trying to market a specific product, his own personal knowledge of the product's benefits will not have any effect on the sales of the product. His job as a marketer is to make the consumers aware of all the benefits they will enjoy by purchasing this product.

CONCLUSION

The general concept expressed in the tefilla of הודו is praise to Hashem. This tefilla, as mentioned before, can be split into 3 parts. The praise of Hashem in these 3 parts can be categorized just like the activity we just did with the advertisements:

Section 1: תקופת ההודיה -

When did these events happen? We praise Hashem for events that happened in the past

Section 2: בפני מי -

Who is the 'target audience?' We enumerate all the people to whom we wish to 'publicize' and make these praises of Hashem known.

Section 3: תוכן ההודיה -

What is the content? We elaborate on all the things for which we praise Hashem.

THE CONTENT

The first two pesukim in this first section of הודו are like a 'heading' or caption for all 3 parts of הודו .

The way in which we praise Hashem has to be just like marketing—it needs to be done publicly!

Loudly! Announced to the whole world! We should not keep these praises to ourselves—we have to spread knowledge of Hashem's kindness to the entire world. This causes an increase in שמחים.

How many loaves of bread can a person eat in one sitting? Not too many.

How, then, can we explain the large number of חלות a person was required to bring alongside his קרבן תודה in the times of the Beis Hamikdash?

If a Yid wanted thank Hashem for a נס that happened to him, he would go up to Beis Hamikdash to bring a קרבן תודה.

"על חלות לחם...יקריב קרבנו..תודה שלמיו" (פרשת צו ז:ג)

Alongside his korban, he would have to bring a large number of challos—40 חלות תודה! And we know that all of these loaves had to be consumed by the day after the korban was brought! Isn't it impossible for one person to eat all these challos in such a short amount of time?

This shows us the manner in which a person should praise Hashem: It should be done publicly, loudly, and amongst many other people. This person who brought the קרבן תודה had to invite many other people to join him in partaking in his סעודת קרבן in order to finish consuming the 40 חלות תודה by the required time.

In this way, the נס that happened to him would become widely acclaimed, publicly acknowledged, and known to many. He would have much opportunity to tell others about the great kindnesses that Hashem performed on his behalf.

As the possuk says: "לך אזבח זבח תודה ובשם ד' אקרא"

This idea can also be seen from the actions of Avraham Avinu:

The medrash describes how אברהם would provide ample food, drink, and amenities for his guests, after which the guests would bless and thank him profusely.

Avraham would say: 'לי אתם מברכין?' 'You're blessing me? You should be blessing the real 'Baal Habayis' Who provides all His creations with food and drink, sustains them, and gives them life!'

The guests would say, 'Where is He?'

And Avraham would reply, 'He rules the Heavens and the Earth...'

When they would hear that, they'd ask, 'So how can we bless Him? How can we show our appreciation?'

And Avraham would ultimately answer, 'ברוך ד' המבורך לעולם ועד'

"הודו לד'" - It is our obligation to praise Hashem. But how?

'קראו בשמו' + 'הודיעו בעמים עלילותיו' + 'שירו לו' + 'זמרו לו' + 'שיחו בכל נפלאותיו'

All of these phrases instruct us in the actions we need to take to praise the name of Hashem:

קראו - קריאה בקול	<i>to publicize</i>
הודיעו - הודעה	<i>to make ה's wonders known</i>
שירו - שירה בפה	<i>verbal praise, song</i>
זמרו - בכלי שיר	<i>with musical instruments</i>
שיחו - מלשון שיחה, לשוחח	<i>different than regular speech (דיבור): light, everyday conversation about this and that</i>

The goal of each of the above-mentioned actions is to publicize Hashem's great name and His nissim in the world—not only to be aware of them ourselves. This, perhaps, is why many times we see people who make large סעודות הודאה to share the nissim that happened to them with as many people as possible.

ACTIVITY

Read three anecdotes to your students, and have them try to identify the common denominator:

1. R' Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky zt"l (the Steipler Gaon) would warn the members of his family not to forget the many kindnesses bestowed upon them by Hakadosh Baruch Hu. One of his grandchildren recounted that the Steipler would remind him, 'Do you remember that time that your eye was hurting you and Hashem made the pain go away? It's important to remember to always thank Hashem for the חסדים He did for you in the past...'

The Steipler would continue, 'I, myself, endured many hardships with the help of Hashem—and I try not forget any of them. I constantly thank and praise Hashem for all the times He saved me.'

2. When R' Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l published his sefer 'אבן האזל', he wrote in his introduction that just like he thanks Hashem for enabling the sefer to reach publication, he also thanks Hashem for the kindnesses of the past, when the Yidden who lived in Eretz Yisroel were spared the horrors of the Holocaust.
3. When Yaakov Avinu approaches his fateful meeting with Eisav, he davens to Hashem for help. He starts his tefilla by praising Hashem for His past kindnesses: 'קטנתי מכל החסדים... אשר עשית עם עבדך'

Common Denominator: All 3 center around the same theme of thanking Hashem for previous חסדים.

When we begin to thank Hashem for the good He is bestowing upon us now, it is incumbent upon us to also thank Him for the kindnesses He has done with us in the past, and request continued chessed for the future.

ACTIVITY

Try it!

Have your students take a minute to write down a recent chessed they are grateful to Hashem for. Then, have them write 2-3 additional חסדים they experienced that are connected to the first one they wrote.

More times than not, included in the second list will be חסדים that Hashem has done for them in the past!

Example:

Thank you, Hashem for helping me to get a good mark on my test yesterday

Thank you, Hashem for giving me such a good memory

Thank you for making me healthy so that I can study well

Thank you for all the tests this year that I got good marks on

In this section of הודו, we will see how we thank and praise Hashem for kindnesses He did with Klal Yisroel in their distant, distant past—even before they became a nation!

At this point, you can teach the פירוש המילים for this section of the tefilla.

Below are additional explanation pointers.

<p>For which חסדים are we praising Hashem? <i>The מצרים and in the נסים and נפלאות מדבר</i></p>	<p>זכרו נפלאותיו אשר עשה</p>
<p>Who are the 'Chosen Ones—' the ones that are important to Hashem? <i>the nation of Klal Yisroel, that He chose from all the other nations - בחירו</i></p>	<p>זרע ישראל...בני יעקב בחירו</p>
<p>What does it mean that Hashem 'made a bris' with Bnei Yisroel? <i>It was a promise that Hashem made to the אבות that they will inherit א"י</i></p>	<p>זכרו לעולם בריתו...אשר כרת את אברהם..ליצחק... יעקב לחק</p>
<p>What did Hashem promise to the אבות in this ברית? <i>That חלק א"י will be their בני - property belonging solely to נחלה</i></p>	<p>לך אתן את ארץ כנען חבל נחלתכם</p>
<p>When did Hashem make this ברית with בני? <i>When we were small in size—a select few people</i></p>	<p>בהיותכם מתי מספר כמעט וגרים בה</p>
<p>After the ברית, how did Hashem protect בני? <i>from the לשון of לעשקם, stealing: Hashem made sure no one 'stole' them הוכחה, punishment: from the לשון of מלכים Hashem punished the kings that wanted to harm them Hashem made sure no one אל תגעו במשיחי approached to do bad to the חשובים of the nation</i></p>	<p>לא הניח לאיש לעשקם...ויוכח עליהם מלכים...אל תגעו במשיחי ובנביאי אל תרעו</p>

שיורו לה' כל הארץ - ויאמרו כל העם אמן

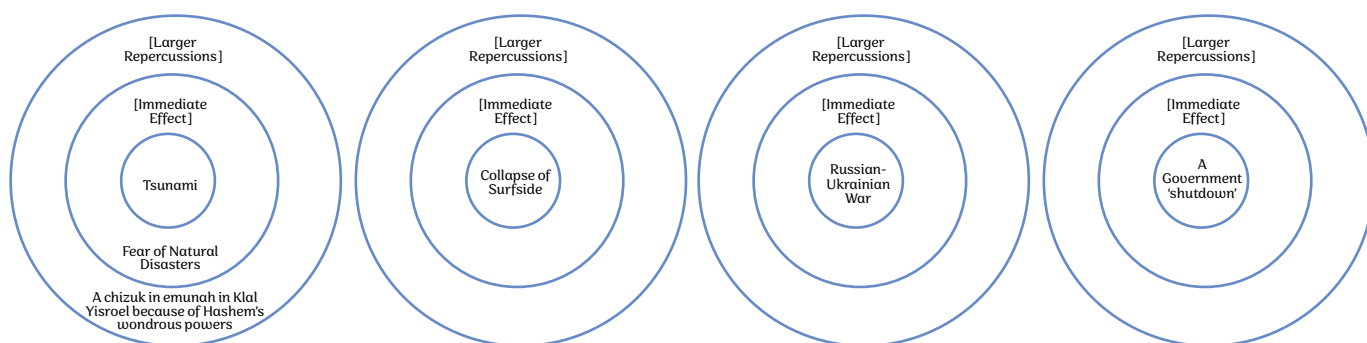
SECTION TWO

ANTICIPATORY SET

Circles of Influence

Every event that happens in the world has an effect. Sometimes the effect is minimal—only on the immediate surroundings, and sometimes the event will affect and influence areas even very far away.

Analyze the first example with your students, then give them time to try and fill in the other circles on their own.



CONCLUSION

Rare natural phenomena cause even the goyim to recognize Hashem's presence with clarity. In the previous section of הודו, we thanked Hashem for His חסדים of the past. Those that were, בעיקר, relating to Klal Yisroel and our recognition of Hashem.

In this section of הודו, we will publicize the חסדים of Hashem and discuss the ones that had an even wider 'circle of influence'—a level where these חסדים and major events impact all the nations of the world and bring them to a הכרה of הקב"ה—not only Klal Yisroel.

As mentioned in the introduction, the source of these pesukim is from the time that the כלשתים sent the ה' ארון back to בני ישראל via self-directed cows. The goyim were brought to a clear recognition that Hashem is the בעל הכוחות כולם and their fake gods are merely powerless figments of their imaginations.

Even now, when we are in galus, we can publicize the greatness of Hashem and His nation (obviously in an appropriate manner and setting).

R' Ben-David, zt"l, one of the גדולים of the Sefardi population in Eretz Yisroel, related a story that occurred while he was sitting with his wife in the waiting room of a government office in America.

It was a lengthy wait, and most of the people in the room were conversing in English, aside from one foreign-looking man who could be heard speaking French.

At a certain point, when R' Ben-David's wife turned to him with a question in Hebrew, the French-speaking man jumped up.

'What language is that? Is that Hebrew?' he asked. 'Are you people Jewish?'

When they replied in the affirmative, the man began to visibly tremble.

'I never met real Jews before!' he explained. 'I read about the Jews in the Bible, and it says they are 'Children of G-d!' And now I'm meeting some of them for the first time...'

He was completely awed and overcome with emotion.

This story is an example of כבוד שמים פרסום amongst the goyim—just from exposing them to the mere concept of a Yid! A small taste of what will be so well-known and publicized to the whole world when Mashiach will arrive, בקרוב.

The passuk in ישעיה describes what will happen when Mashiach comes:

'כה אמר ד' גואל ישראל... מלכים יראו וקמו שרים וישתחו למען ד' אשר נאמן' (ישעיה מט:ז')

'This is what Hashem, the Redeemer of Yisroel says: ...Kings will see and stand up, nobles will bow down to Hashem Who is trustworthy...'

The medrash on this passuk brings a story in the name of רבי יוסי:

I was once walking over a large area of the country and I saw a קיסר (important government official) riding on a very expensive horse, accompanied by many other important officials of that city. The קיסר noticed a Jewish baby girl who was afflicted with a terrible skin condition. When he saw her, he immediately dismounted from his horse and bowed down to her.

The rest of the officials got very angry at him and asked, 'To this disgraced one you are bowing?!'

He immediately answered them, 'Don't be upset. In the future, even the highest and most prominent of officials and rulers of the nations will bow to them (the Jews).'



THE BOTTOM LINE

When the geulah comes, Hashem's name will be known and glorified before the whole world. Until that time, there is still opportunity to praise and publicize His חסדים so as to glorify His name amongst the nations of the world as much as possible and to increase כבוד שמים.

THE CONTENT

The pesukim in this section of the tefillah can be divided into 2 parts:

1. Pesukim that describe the honor of Hashem and His greatness
2. Pesukim that describe how מלכות ה' will appear at the time of the גאולה

מלכות ה' בזמן הגאולה	כבוד ה' וגדלותו
שאו מנחה...השתחוה לה'	שירו לד' כל הארץ...מיום ליום ישועתו
חילו מפניו כל הארץ	ספרו בגוים כבודו...כי גדול ה'
ישמחו השמים...ויאמרו בגוים ד' מלך	כי כל אלוהי העמים אלילים וד' שמים עשה

Here are some explanations of the pesukim:

<p>בשרו from the word בשורה, like good news</p> <p>מיום ליום ישועתו And what is this ישועה that we should be relating? The nissim that Hashem does in His world on a daily basis. They look like nature, but we know they are not. (How many billions of people wake up from their sleep each morning?!)</p>	<p>בשרו מיום ליום ישועתו</p>
<p>אלוהי העמים referring to the avodah zara of the goyim</p> <p>אלילים from the word אל -nothing. They have no inherent power</p>	<p>כי כל אלוהי העמים אלילים</p>
<p>הוד inner beauty</p> <p>הדר outer, recognizable beauty</p> <p>לפניו these two forms of beauty can only be attributed simultaneously to the beauty of the Shechina—a spiritual beauty. In the physical world, both of these forms of beauty can not be found together.</p>	<p>הוד והדר לפניו</p>
<p>חילו fear</p> <p>מפניו כל הארץ all the inhabitants of the world will fear Hashem at the time of the גאולה</p>	<p>חילו מפניו כל הארץ</p>

אף תכון

at the time of the גאולה, the world will have a solid, sturdy
base and foundation

בל תמוט

that will not be destroyed

ירעם הים

at the time of the גאולה, even the seas will roar with
the praise of Hashem

ומלואו

all the seas' creations and inhabitants will praise Him,
too.

אף תכון תבל בל תמוט

ירעם הים ומלואו

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

*After learning the meanings and explanations of the words of this section of the tefillah,
write a list of descriptive words on the board:*

Fear, Joy, News, Song, Strength, Beauty

*Have students look in their siddurim and find the pesukim that relate to each of the
descriptions on the board.*

Once we have described the greatness of הקב"ה and what His מלכות will look like when
Mashiach comes, it is then fitting that we conclude this section of the tefillah with a בקשה for the
ביאת גואל:

'אמרו הושיענו...וקבצנו מן הגויים'

And for the גאולה we are confident will soon come, we thank Hashem by finishing with:

'ברוך ד' אלקי ישראל...ויאמרו כל העם...הללוהו'

רוממו ה' אלוֹקינוּ - כי גמל עלי

SECTION THREE

In this section that was added to the tefillah of הודו during the time of בית שני when the ארון was נגנז, the pesukim refer to praise of Hashem even during times of גלות, to show that the kedusha of the Beis Hamikdash did not end, even though the ארון was not present.

ANTICIPATORY SET

Draw 2 charts on the board and fill them out by brainstorming with your class.

	THERE IS, AND IT'S A GOOD THING THERE IS:		THERE ISN'T, AND IT'S A GOOD THING THERE ISN'T:	
To do with our class, school, or daily life:	Achdus	Derech Eretz	Fighting	Competition
To do with the whole world, in general:	Health	Routine	World War	Food Shortage

	THERE IS, AND IT'S A SHAME THAT THERE IS:		THERE ISN'T, AND IT'S A SHAME THERE ISN'T:	
To do with our class, school, or daily life:	Peer Pressure	Heavy Workload	Class Trip!	A Weekly Vacation!
To do with the whole world, in general:	Poverty	Hardships	Beis Hamikdash	Parnassa without Working

CONCLUSION

Life in this world is full of an abundance of good that Hashem is constantly showering down upon us, in all areas. Sometimes, though, we need to learn to pay attention to and focus on all this שפע. We tend to fall into a pattern of הרגל, where we take all this chessed for granted. It becomes the status quo and we no longer fully appreciate or are properly in awe of all the gifts and blessings in our lives.

In addition, we have to realize that because we are still in גלות, and were not yet zoche to the גאולה שלמה, there are challenges and difficulties in our lives, and in the world as a whole. This is because unmarred טוב, complete happiness is not possible until Mashiach comes. Only when the גאולה arrives will there be a שלמות of טוב, both in רוחניות and גשמיות.

Like Dovid Hamelech describes in Tehillim:

בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון... אז ימלא שחוק פינו

When Mashiach comes, nothing will be lacking—the טוב that we will have will cause us to actually laugh from joy!

THE BOTTOM LINE

Now, however, that we are still in גלות, we need to remember to praise Hashem constantly, by tapping into the unwavering emunah and knowledge that He is with us throughout, is constantly providing for us, and will never abandon us.

This is the idea that is expressed in the pesukim in this section of הודו - pesukim that show what we have to praise Hashem for even in גלות.

THE CONTENT

The pesukim in this section can be divided into 3 categories:

1. **How** do we praise Hashem?
2. For **what** do we praise Hashem? (Descriptions of His חסדים with us even during גלות)
3. **How often** for the חסד of Hashem—that it should continue infinitely

CATEGORY ONE

HOW DO WE PRAISE HASHEM?

How do we praise Hashem?	רוממו ה' אלוקינו מלשון לרומם is רוממו - to elevate - the name of Hashem, through telling of His praise and His Kindnesses so the whole world will recognize his מלכות
Which physical actions should we do while praising Hashem?	השתחוּוּ להדום רגליו... השתחוּוּ להר קדשו We should bow to Hashem. להדום רגליו means to bow toward the ground, because the entire earth is like the הדום רגליו - the footstool of Hashem. When the Beis Hamikdash was in existence, בני" bowed to Hashem on ביהמ"ק - the הר קדשו.
With what type of energy should we serve Hashem?	תנו עוז לאלוקים על ישראל גאותו A person has to garner עז - inner strength that is within him - and use it to serve Hashem. What can give a person this strength? The knowledge that Klal Yisroel are the גאותו - the pride of Hashem - and He waits for their avodah.

תנו עוד לאלוקים על ישראל גאוותו Another beautiful way to explain the passuk of

ACTIVITY

Have girls try to guess the price/value of various items.

Diamond ring, professional camera, plane ticket to Italy, a cigarette butt, a Bosch mixer, etc.

Does it make sense that some of these items would increase in value depending on the purchaser?

Why or why not?

In an instance where someone has a particular interest or need for one of these items, its value would increase dramatically.

A cigarette butt is usually a discarded piece of detritus - with little or no value.

However, a museum in England boasts ownership of a specific cigarette butt used by Winston Churchill. It was sold for an astonishing \$10,000!

A piece of trash - now an antique item with a rich history because of its user.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes, we may feel like our strengths and abilities are of little value. We don't value our actions or our accomplishments. We need to internalize the words of this passuk, 'תנו עוד לאלוקים' - Give strength to Hashem!

Does this seem possible? How does it make sense?

Hashem, who is All-Powerful and the Creator of the world—I can give Him strength?

Yes!

With that small action, that mitzvah, that word, that good thought—you can add כח and strength to the כח של מעלה ...And Hashem is waiting for it!

CATEGORY TWO

FOR WHAT DO WE PRAISE HASHEM?

Descriptions of His חסדים with us even during גלות

How is Hashem's רחמנות for us expressed in terms of עונש and שכר?

והוא רחום יכפר עון...והרבה להשיב אפו

Hashem is merciful and therefore forgives our aveiros, והרבה - from the word הרבה, a lot— He is abundant להשיב אפו —to rest from His anger over חטאים that we do.

Which past galus teaches us about the power of our tefillos?

אנוכי ד'...המעלך מארץ מצרים...הרחב פיך ואמלאהו

During גלות מצרים, Bnei Yisroel saw clearly how the tefillos they daavened with their mouths were answered. And this is what Hashem wants: הרחב פיך —we should open our mouths wide with בקשות, and ואמלאהו — He will fulfill them.

Who is the only One we can trust in and rely on to help us?

ד'...משגב לנו...אשרי אדם בוטח בך

Hashem is our משגב —an expression of strength—and protects us with this strength. Someone who trust in Hashem is praiseworthy— אשרי אדם ...

Another beautiful way to explain the passuk of ד' משגב לנו:

During the Holocaust, when much of European Jewry was sent to the concentration camps, many Yidden tried every possible strategy, plan, or idea to save themselves from their impending fate.

One of these was a young girl who tried to escape from the cattle car that was transporting her to the camps. She jumped off the moving train and began to run for her life.

Eventually, she came to a small, sleepy-looking village. She knocked on the first door that she saw, intending to beg for a place of refuge.

The door opened to reveal a German general of the S.S. army!

He stood there, aghast, not believing that a Jewish girl had had the fortitude to escape and the audacity to knock on his door! He directed the horrified girl's gaze to the path leading up to his house, which was lined on both sides by ferocious-looking, beastly guard dogs of tremendous size. He asked her for an explanation: How was it that his dogs had failed to harm her on her way up to the front door?

The shell-shocked girl didn't know what to say. In her hurry and fright, she hadn't even noticed the dogs!

The cruel general had a diabolical plan to suggest:

He said he would allow the girl to stay in his home, safe, overnight. In the morning, she would need to traverse the front walkway on her own, down the path between all the vicious dogs. This way, he would be privy to either an entertaining show of violence or an outright miracle! He promised that if she would manage to walk the path unharmed, he would commit to keeping her safe until the end of the war.

STORY

היידר

There are no words to describe the night she endured. Picturing, imagining, visualizing what awaited her the next day. She focused intently on the concept of 'ה' משגב לנו', subjugating herself to the knowledge that only He would be able to save her from a gruesome fate.

The next morning, the general dragged her outside and settled himself a safe distance away to see what would happen. The girl approached the path on legs that were shaking so badly, they were barely able to support her weight.

Astonishingly, as she made her way down the path, not one dog even came close to her! They all stood their distance, silently watching until she reached the end of the walkway, unscathed.

The stunned general kept his word—he harbored the girl until the end of the war, when she made her way to Eretz Yisroel and eventually was zoche to marry R' Chaim Sarna, zt"l!

If we would only believe and strengthen our recognition that Hashem has the ability to protect us, we would have a much easier time reaching the level of 'אשרי אדם'—tranquility and calm.

CATEGORY THREE

BAKASHOS FOR THE CHESSED OF HASHEM—

that it should continue infinitely

What is the request we ask of Hashem about the kindnesses and mercy we want from Him?

קל נקמות ה' קל נקמות הופיע...השב גמול על גאים

We ask Hashem 'לא תכלא' - do not hold back the חסד and the רחמים from me, and we remind Hashem of the רחמים that He has on us—זכר רחמיו ה'.

What is the repayment Hashem gives to someone who doesn't go in His ways?

עזרנו ומגיננו...כי בו ישמח לבנו

We ask Hashem to use His great strength to repay the haughty גוים and give them what they deserve.

What causes a person to feel joy?

ה'..משגב לנו...אשרי אדם בוטח בך

Someone waits for Hashem's salvation—and because Hashem always helps, the bitachon he has in Hashem causes him joy.

Which specific requests for Hashem's chessed do we say in these pesukim?

יהי חסדך ה' עלינו

Hashem should shower endless חסד on us

הראנו ה' חסדיך

We should be able to recognize the חסד

כדנו למען חסדיך

Hashem should redeem us with His חסד

ואני בחסדך בטחתי

We always trusted in Hashem's חסד with us, and now we are thanking Him for all this חסד

הראנו ד' חסדיך to explain the passuk of

An interesting study was published recently in the Hamodia newspaper, regarding a specific species of salmon commonly found in the waters of Alaska.

Data showed that the average amount of salmon harvested from one of the south coasts was in the area of 5 million per year. Over time, there was a drastic reduction in this amount, and the new quantity of salmon they were collecting was closer to 500,000 a year!

The administrators of the Game and Fishing Department hired a group of researchers to look into this strange and disturbing phenomenon. Why was their salmon supply diminishing?

After a period of intense observation and research, the team came up with the fascinating science behind the reduction in the number of salmon that were being caught:

The area surrounding this particular coast used to swarm with predatory foxes who would catch and eat the salmon from the ocean. In recent years, the fishermen tried to find ways to prevent the foxes from eating their salmon and thus, they hoped, increase the number of fish they would catch. When they finally managed to eliminate the foxes, they realized that their efforts had yielded exactly the opposite of the effect they were trying to achieve—they were catching less salmon than before. Why?

When the foxes used to catch and eat the salmon, they would devour the fish while sitting among the bushes that line the coast. They would then leave the fish remains among the bushes. These remains eventually rotted and decayed and became a very effective soil fertilizer! This fertilizer, in turn, caused a thick kind of growth to sprout along the coast's edge, which prevented the soil from eroding into the ocean. The diminished amount of soil in the water allowed a stronger flow of water to bring the salmon along with it up near the coast so the fishermen could harvest large amounts with ease.

Once they got rid of the foxes, however, this growth did not appear and the soil did erode into the water, allowing a diminished number of salmon to flow along with the water into the fishing areas...

Thus, the disappearance of the foxes caused the salmon crop to be reduced from 5 million to 500,000 a year!

Besides for the incredible נפלאות הבורא apparent in this study, notice the incredible irony! What the fishermen looked at as predatory, destructive foxes, were actually sources of abundance and שפע!

So it is in Hashem's world—everything and anything that happens is an expression of Hashem's goodness and chessed. Sometimes, with our limited eyesight, we are only capable of seeing the 'bad' part of the incident, so our tefilla here is that we be able to recognize the good and the chessed in every situation. **הראנו ד' חסדיך** !

CONCLUSION OF הוֹדוּ

Throughout our lessons on the tefillah of Hodu, we discussed the depth of all the praises written in it. We've covered many different areas of שבח to Hakadosh Baruch Hu—in the past, when Klal Yisroel were distant, in the present, from our current place in galus, personal/individual praise, praise of Klal Yisroel, praise of the goyim.

הוֹדוּ is like the 'opening statement' of the praise we will say in the rest of our tefillos of פסוקי דזמרה –so we definitely want it to be the best version it can be!

Like R' Avigdor Miller zt"l said:

The passuk in Tehillim says 'טוב להודות לך'. It is good to praise and thank Hashem.

When the Mishna in Pirkei Avos says, 'אי זוהי דרך טובה שיבור לו האדם' - 'What is a good path for a person to choose?'

The answer is the path of הודאה!

There is no comparison between someone who goes through life praising Hashem and someone who goes without it.

Two people can share the same journey, yet one will have a pleasant and enjoyable time while the other will struggle mightily. How?

Everything is dependent on their perspective throughout the journey. One person is only noticing what goes wrong. He sees only how hard it is, while the other chooses to dwell on the pleasant aspects and the good times and thus has a pleasant and enjoyable trip.

We need to accustom ourselves to going through life's journey with an outlook of praise to Hashem.

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY #1

Distribute this chart for students to complete.

[This can be done after each individual section of הוֹדוּ, also.]

	THE PESUKIM	THE CONTENT	THE PASSUK FROM THIS SECTION THAT RESONATED WITH ME
SECTION 1			
SECTION 2			
SECTION 3			

ACTIVITY #2

Distribute a set of cards to each student. The front card says, 'Your journey of הודאה has begun!'

Each card has a picture of a different 'trip item' and a prompt. Encourage students to fill out these cards over the course of the next month.

- flashlight - a praise to Hashem that lights up my day
- knapsack - a praise to Hashem that accompanies me always:
- food - a praise that gives me strength is:
- drink - a praise that revives me is:
- compass - I am changing the direction of my thoughts/outlook through this praise:
- walking shoes - a praise to Hashem that accompanies me with every step:
- map - I can map out a new path for myself with praise to Hashem for:

ברוך שואמר

IN THIS TEFILLAH

We praise Hashem's unlimited power, absolute control over the whole world, and reliability to fulfill His word.

ANTICIPATORY SET

There was something wrong with my cellphone service one day, and I picked up the phone to call my service provider.

I was greeted by an automated voice listing a menu of all the options of services I could choose from. For this option, press 1, for that one, press 2, and so on and so forth.

I felt myself getting dizzy, so I dialed 0 to be connected to a real live human—forget the digital recordings, give me a person, please!

When someone picked up on the other line, I explained that my cell phone was not working properly and I needed help immediately.

'Oh, I'm sorry,' the lady at the other end apologized. 'That's an issue for the technical department. I'll transfer your call.'

After some irritating classical music, another representative picked up. I repeated my spiel.

'Oh, I'm sorry,' the man at the other end apologized. 'This sounds like an issue for the billing department. I'll transfer your call.'

By now, I was singing along with the music.

I got to speak to the Billing department, the Customer Service department, the Troubleshooting department, the Cellular Devices department, and the General Issues department before I got so frustrated that I just hung up and decided to have someone else deal with the issue! The cellphone company I was dealing with was so large that they needed to split into many different departments with different managers and staff in charge of each one.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Hashem is the One Who created this huge world and everything in it. Nevertheless, He remains in charge of the entire 'company!' Every 'department' and 'service' is under His complete and total control and dominion. All of our tefillos, for any and every need or desire, need only to be directed to Him- the complete and total Boss, בעל הכוחות כולם!

THE CONTENT

The tefilla of ברוך שאמר is the start of the entire sequence of Pesukei D'zimrah. It concludes with the bracha of 'מהלל בתשבחות' - Hashem Who is praised with all the possible praises.



משנה ברורה: 'שבח זו תקנוהו אנשי כנסת הגדולה על ידי פתקא דנפל מן שמיא ומצאהו כתוב בו, ויש בו כ"ז תבות'

'This tefilla of praise was established by the Anshei K'nesses Hagedolah by way of a note that fell from shamayim with the words of the tefilla inscribed on it and it has 87-ז" - letters...' (the word כז means 'fine gold,' and alludes to the inestimable value of the tefilla)

What a powerful thought—the very words of this tefilla came down to us directly from shamayim! How significant and קדוש each word must be, and it is therefore incumbent on us to understand what we are saying when we recite them.

כח היצירה של ה' בעולמו

HASHEM'S POWER OF CREATION

ברוך שואמר והיה העולם:

Have a student come up and verbally list a few school supplies: 'Eraser, pencils, notebooks, etc.' Point out that nothing happened as a result of her words.

Hashem created this world in the most miraculous, astounding way—as He spoke, the world was created! Things came into existence as a result of His words, alone.

Picture an artist working on a portrait. A scientist (or team of scientists) developing a brand-new invention. How many hours, days, weeks, months, sometimes years(!) will it take until their product reaches completion? How many complex studies and years of research did it take to invent the simplest of electrical outlets?

How long do you think it took the programmers to create the famous 'Waze' program?

How many millions of dollars and years to work out all the details and parts and facets of the program?

Hashem created the most intricate, complex, all-encompassing 'product' of all—this whole world!—and the entire process took a matter of days!

Like it says in Pirkei Avos: 'בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם' - the world was created with ten 'sayings.' Hashem would command, 'יהי אור' - let there be light! 'יהי רקיע' - let there be skies! And each creation would appear in its proper place.

ברוך אומר ועושה:

The meforshim on these words explain that here we praise Hashem for being trustworthy to keep His word and His promises. Every promise that Hashem makes is fulfilled—even if it takes many years and generations until we see its fulfillment.

Ask students for examples of where we see this in Klal Yisroel's history: Yitzchak's birth, Yetzias Mitzrayim, etc..

In the בריית בין הבתרים, Hashem promised Avraham that after the galus, his descendants would return to Eretz Yisroel. This promise came to fruition—400 years later, exactly as decreed and promised in the bris.

This is in contrast to human beings who are quick to promise but are not always reliable/capable of fulfilling their words.

ברוך גוזר ומקיים:

With these words we are specifying the idea that when Hashem promises to punish רשעים, He fulfills his promises and does not forgo the punishments that they deserve. The רשע can be 100% certain that he will get what is coming to him! Hashem is not like kings of flesh and blood who may die, take ill, or recant before the decreed punishment is meted out.

ברוך עושה בראשית:

This phrase is written in the present tense: 'Blessed is the One who **makes** the world'—But wasn't the world created close to 6,000 years ago? Why don't we say, 'Blessed is the One who **made** the world?'

This phrase brings out another aspect of Hashem's greatness. Even though the world was created so long ago, it only continues to exist because Hashem is constantly upkeeping and sustaining it. Each day anew, He is still 'making' and 'creating' the world again. If He would pause or stop or take a break for even one second, the world would fall apart and return to a state of nothingness-תהו ובהו.

: ברוך מרחם על הארץ... ברוך מרחם על הבריות

With these phrases, we are praising Hashem for His mercy in sustaining all the various forms of His creations—wild and domestic animals, landforms, etc. (ברוך מרחם על הארץ) We also specify Hashem's compassion on His human creations-ברוך מרחם על הבריות.

The entire world is under the direct supervision of Hashem—His השגחה פרטית. Even the tiniest action that a person performs on this earth is pre-ordained and sanctioned and can only be completed with Hashem's 'consent.' This is what Chazal say: 'אין אדם נוקף אצבעו מלמטה אלא אם כן הכריזו על כך מלמעלה' -A person does not even bang his little finger down here unless it was thus destined from Above!

With these words, we emphasize that every single aspect of our lives is under the השגחה פרטית, the specific supervision of Hashem.

When a person is in a troubling situation, he can utilize the power of tefilla to ask Hashem for assistance. There is nothing barring Hashem from sending him his salvation, if it is for the person's good. This is in stark contrast to a human being who does not have the unlimited capabilities necessary to fulfill another's request at whim.

A story is told of a man who was desperately awaiting a government permit to enable him to complete a huge project. An enormous amount of money hinged on the project's completion. Countless askanim reached out to various government officials to plead this man's case and attempt to procure the necessary documentation. Some seemed inclined to help, while others ignored all attempts at communication.

The deadline loomed, and there was no permit in sight.

The man was despondent. He sat down with a sefer Tehillim and fervently started to recite the words. Perek after perek, he poured his heart and soul into his tefillos, placing all his worries and hopes into the hands of Hashem. By the time he left, the feeling of despair had lifted and he was feeling calm and hopeful.

The phone call arrived a few hours later; his permit had come through.

Which actions did the man take to try and achieve his goal?

Ultimately, which part was his most effective hishtadlus?

ברוך מרחם על בריות- We have to remember to only turn to the right address.

הנהגת ה' במתן שכר

HASHEM'S REWARDS

ברוך משלם שכר טוב ליראיו

Hashem does not hold back reward from anyone. Every person gets exactly what they deserve—even if a רשע does something good, he will get rewarded for his actions. There is a difference in reward though: Hashem gives the רשעים schar that is not 'טוב'—not good. What kind of reward is not good? Reward that is received in הזה עולם. By receiving schar in This World, they are detracting from their real schar in the ultimate עולם הגמול —Olam Haba.

This is what we mean when we praise Hashem for giving the tzaddikim 'schar that is good'—ultimate schar, in the World to Come. Hashem withholds the שכר from them in הזה עולם and reserves it for them to enjoy in הבא עולם.

This idea is reflected in the well-known concept of 'צדיק ורע לו, רשע וטוב לו'. The tzaddik suffers in this world, even though his actions are righteous. This enables him to receive his true reward in הבא עולם.

מלכות ה' קיימת לעולם

HASHEM'S KINGSHIP IS ETERNAL

ברוך פודה ומציל:

What is the difference between פודה and מציל?

The word פודה means 'to redeem' (להוציא), while the word מציל means 'to save.' These two words portray two different aspects of Hashem's protection of us in every situation: He is מציל a person in a preventative manner so that he shouldn't fall into a צרה or the hands of an enemy; additionally, if a person has already become ensnared in a trying situation, Hashem is פודה —redeems him and extricates him from the trouble that he is in.

STORY

A Sephardic Rav was traveling with two of his talmidim. As they were making their way through an obscure path in the desert, a swarthy, menacing Arab came upon them. He dismounted from his horse and announced that he intended to execute the Rabbi right there and then.

The Rav's two talmidim tried with all their might to beg, plead, and convince the Arab not to harm their beloved Rabbi—to no avail. When the Rav saw what was happening, he instructed his talmidim to back away slowly and distance themselves from the scene. He was left alone with the menacing Arab.

The talmidim stood at a distance, davening and beseeching Hashem to spare their Rabbi's life. The Arab began his preparations to execute the Rav. As was the 'tradition,' he allowed the Rav one final request.

The Rav, to the Arab's shock, requested a cup of water. He proceeded to make a loud, intense bracha of shehakol with great concentration. 'שהכל נהיה בדברו...'

Suddenly, hoofbeats sounded nearby. A senior Arab official rode by the scene and commanded, 'Kill all the Jews—but leave their Rabbis alone!' The Arab immediately released the Rav, and looked around frantically for his two talmidim. Alas, they had already fled to safety.

פודה ומציל - He both saves and redeems.

The tefilla concludes with a bracha of praise for Hashem.

נהללך ונשבחך ... What is the difference between הלל and שבח?

הלל is an exultation, an eternal expression of praise. One might say the words out loud so that others will be able to hear the praise, as well.

Nowadays, people are much more reserved when expressing thoughts and feelings. We tend to keep things to ourselves instead of shouting them out for the whole world to hear. When does this change? When the joy or simcha or event is so exciting, so out-of-this-world major, that we just can't contain ourselves... *Mazel tov! My sister just got engaged! My aunt had a baby! I got into seminary! I'm going to sleepaway camp! 'I got a hundred on my final!'*

When the feelings run so deep that they just can't help but overflow—that's the הליל. Shout it out! Tell the whole world!

שבח, on the other hand, is when a person contemplates the praise of Hashem on his own—an internal, self-reflection of thanks to Hashem aroused by deep inner feelings of gratitude and thanksgiving.

This concluding bracha encompasses both שבח and הלל.

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Students use highlighters to match up the phrases of the tefilla to their proper explanations.

מזמור לתודה

IN THIS TEFILLAH

We thank Hashem for the many miracles He performs for us each day. Through a variety of expressions of joy, we bring ourselves to a recognition of the kindnesses, both hidden and revealed that He bestows upon us.

ANTICIPATORY SET

Picture a packed Egged bus stop in the heart of Yerushalayim on a sweltering, airless Erev Shabbos. As the sun blazes overhead, the crowd swells—seminary girls with duffels, American couples with sheitel boxes, Yerushalmi men and boys, and crying babies. Everyone's waiting for the elusive 450 bus to Ashdod.

Minutes drag by.

Still no bus.

Tension mounts.

Phones are whipped out, frantic calls to the Egged dispatcher. "Where's the 450? It's almost Shabbos!" The crowd spills into the street, frustration rising with the heat.

Then—finally—a green bus appears in a cloud of dust. The cheers die quickly, though, when the blinking sign reveals: Bus 401 -Bnei Brak.

A collective groan. That's not where they need to go!

One man steps up.

"Nehag, bevakasha—we've waited for hours. Can't you please take us to Ashdod instead?" More voices join in: "Please! We'll pay extra! We'll do anything!"

The driver surveys the sweaty, desperate crowd.

A pause.

Then: "Okay, we'll go to Ashdod."

A shout of joy erupts as people board the cool, air-conditioned bus.

"Todah! Thank you!" They shower the driver with gratitude.

Once the doors close, the driver quietly speaks into his phone:

"Ya, chabibi, the plan worked. Everyone is happy."

You see, this was the 450 bus to Ashdod—it had been along. The driver just swapped his sign to turn a crowd of complainers into a busload of grateful fans.

DISCUSS

What do you think the reaction of the crowd would have been if the bus driver had kept the sign as the 450 Bus to Ashdod when he finally arrived after all their waiting?

What does the punchline of the story teach us about the correlation between our expectations and our level of gratitude?

Where have you seen this correlation play out in real-life scenarios?

THE BOTTOM LINE

When the people at the bus stop thought the bus was really the 401 to Bnei Brak and the bus driver's willingness to travel to Ashdod was an unexpected bonus, their entitled feelings turned into feelings of gratitude and they expressed their appreciation.

Approaching life with expectations and feelings of entitlement automatically causes a lack of gratitude. When we take our health, our happiness, and our gifts for granted, we will scarcely turn to Hakadosh

Baruch Hu with hakaras hatov and overflowing thanks for everything He gives us. If, however, we realize that everything He grants us is a gift, an undeserved 'bonus,' then our attitude will become one of boundless gratitude and appreciation.

INTRODUCTION

Though it is part of the סדר התפילה that we say daily, Mizmor L'soda is, in actuality, one of the perakim of Tehillim - פרק ק'. It was not composed by Dovid Hamelech, though.

Mizmor L'soda is one of the 11 mizmorim that Moshe Rabbeinu himself composed! (פרקים ק-צ)

Mizmor L'sodah was said in the Beis Hamikdash during the offering of a קרבן תודה.

The אבודרהם points out that Hashem's name is written four times in this perek of Mizmor L'sodah, corresponding to the four crises that obligated someone to bring a קרבן תודה in the Beis Hamikdash:

1. חולה ונתרפא - Someone who had been ill and was healed
2. יורדי הים - Someone who had safely travelled overseas
3. חבוש בבית האסורים - Someone who had been incarcerated (in prison) and was released.
4. מדבר - Someone who had successfully crossed a desert

These people had confronted challenging times and escaped with their lives.

(Today, the equivalent of bringing a קרבן תודה is when someone bentches Gomel.)



These four instances can be remembered using the acronym 'חיים' as in the passuk: 'וכל החיים יודוך סלה' – 'All living things will thank You forever'

ח - חבוש (incarcerated in prison)

י - ים (seafarers)

י - יסורים (illness-pains)

מ - מדבר (desert)

Although Mizmor L'soda had been originally recited in the Beis Hamikdash during the offering of a קרבן תודה, Chazal instituted this perek as part of our daily tefillos so that we can thank Hashem for the many miracles (sometimes unrecognized miracles) that He performs for us every day.

According to most opinions, Mizmor L'soda is recited while standing, as it commemorates קרבן תודה, which was offered while standing. It is omitted on days when the קרבן תודה wasn't brought—Shabbos, Yom Tov, Erev Yom Kippur, Erev Pesach, and Chol Hamoed Pesach (because the korban contained chametz).

Q: If we recite Mizmor L'soda in place of bringing the korban todah (which was brought after being saved from a specific crisis), why do we recite it every single day? Which 'redemption from crisis' are we thanking Hashem for?'

A: According to the של"ה הקדוש, every one of us is in crisis every single day. Just by waking up in the morning, we should be overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude for all the 'crises' that Hashem is averting for us:

My feet work; I can get out of bed! My respiratory system works; I can breathe! My eyes work; I can see! Our very lives are by default in 'crisis mode' – only through Hashem keeping us healthy and upkeeping our existence every moment of every day, can we survive.

Q: If we say Mizmor L'soda in place of bringing a korban, why is it recited as part of the Pesukei D'Zimra section of davening? Wouldn't it make more sense for it to be part of the 'korbanos' section?

A: According to many opinions, Mizmor L'soda should intentionally be sung to a tune. That's why it takes its place as part of Pesukei D'zimra, the tefillos of song and praise. The לבוש says:

'Mizmor L'soda should be said in a tune, because it is a pleasant and praiseworthy song that they would say while bringing the korbanos of todah to give praise and thanks to Hashem for all the good that He has done for us...'

'מזמור לתודה יש לאומרו בנגינה מפני שהוא שיר נאה ומשובח שהיו אומרים אותו על כל קרבני התודות שהיו מקריבין לתת שבח ותודה לאלקים על כל הטובות שגמלנו...'



'All the tefillos will be nullified when Mashiach comes, but praise will not. All the korbanos will be nullified, but a korban Todah will not. Meaning to say: All the tefillos will be null because Klal Yisroel will not need to request any of their needs in this world, because all their days will be filled with only good; they will only have need for praise and thanks to Hashem. So too, there will be no sinners and therefore no need for the 'aveirah korbanos' of אשם and חטאת ...

'Chazal say: All songs will be nullified in the future (when Mashiach comes), except Mizmor L'soda, because His kindnesses and goodness will never stop...'

To explain the concept expressed in both of these similar sources, we can look to the words of R' Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l: 'On day, in the future, everything on Earth will be so ideal that there will be no reason to supplicate Hashem for changes. Even then, prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving will still be appropriate. We will no longer need tefillos for our needs, because all of our needs will be taken care of at that time. We will also no longer have need for the other korbanos, many of which were brought as a result of distancing ourselves from Hashem through aveiros. At that future time, the yetzer hara will no longer be operating, and we will all recognize that 'ד' אחד ושמו אחד'. The korban todah [and subsequently, Mizmor L'sodah] was not brought as a result of imperfection; therefore, it will be brought/said in perpetuity.

מדרש: 'כל התפילות בטלות לעתיד לבוא וההודיה אינה בטלה. כל הקרבנות בטלים לעתיד לבוא וקרבן תודה אינו בטל. רצונו לומר: כי התפילות בטלות שלא יצטרכו ישראל לשאול צרכי עולם הזה כי בטובה גדולה יהיו כל הימים ואין להם אלא שבח והודאה לק- ל וכן לא יהיו חוטאים שיצטרכו לקרבן חטאת ואשם...'

לבוש: 'אמרו חז"ל: כל השירות עתידות ליבטל חוץ ממזמור לתודה כי חסדיו וטובותיו לא יפסקו לעולם'

CONCLUSION

The חיים explains that Mizmor L'soda is recited in the beginning section of Pesukei D'zimra and serves as an introduction to Ashrei and the הללוקה.

After we internalize Hashem's control and involvement in our personal lives, we can then move on to the rest of Pesukei D'zimra, where we praise Hashem for His general greatness in the world and His control and providence over every aspect of the world at

פסוק א'

'הריעו לד' כל הארץ'

The word הריעו is from the same שורש as תרועה - a trumpet/shofar blast
הריעו תרועת שמחה על מלכותו – We announce to everyone on Earth to call out in joy about Hashem's sovereignty. (ספורנו)

IMAGINE

Yossi gets off the school bus at the end of a long, tiring day at school. He's hungry, he got in a fight with one of his friends, and Rabbi told him that he has to pay more attention in class. When he stomps into his house, it's clear to everyone to keep their distance—almost as if Yossi is wearing a bold sign: **CAUTION: BAD MOOD.**

For the rest of the day, nothing goes right for Yossi.

'We always have fleishigs for supper. Eew!'

'My favorite pajamas are always in the wash!'

'Why do I have such an early bedtime? It's not fair!'

The house is too hot and stuffy, the toys are boring, the homework is impossible. Because Yossi is in a negative frame of mind, everything he encounters the rest of that day is viewed negatively.

BOTTOM LINE

The same is true in reverse. When we are in a positive frame of mind and we feel grateful for all the gifts Hashem has given us, we view the whole world in that same grateful, positive lens. Everything we encounter, we view with those 'rose-colored' glasses.

This gives us another understanding on the words: 'הריעו לד' כל הארץ' -

When we are in the positive 'הריעו לד' - mode, that's how we view the whole world- 'כל הארץ' (מלבי"ם)



! 'הריעו לד' כל הארץ' = ה,ל,כ,ה, of the words, ראשי תבות of the words, The אריז"ל points out the הלכה actually comes from the שורש of ה,ל,כ, - to walk, to go. Halacha, therefore, has the deeper meaning of 'walking.' This signifies that following halacha is a way of life; it's our way of 'walking' with Hashem. When a person is grateful to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, this is the best form of hakaras hatov — טוה, ה,ל,כ,ה, כל הארץ-ה,ל,כ,ה, . הריעו לד' כל הארץ-ה,ל,כ,ה, . Walk with Him, follow His halachos and stay true to His will.

'עבדו את ד' בשמחה'

We begin by telling everyone on Earth to call out and proclaim: 'Serve Hashem with joy!' Why? What about 'עבודת ד' should engender such joy and simcha?

'There's a difference between avodas Hashem and work that is done for a human boss. Someone who works for a human will not rejoice in his work, because he is not always confident that he will receive payment for it. And even if he does receive payment, the payment is not related to his work—the work he does is just a means to get paid. Avodas Hashem, however, is not like that. The work itself is the reward and the purpose! And therefore, this type of avodah should be done with joy.'

מלבי"ם: 'יש הבדל בין עבודת ד' ובין העובד לבשר ודם, כי העובד לבשר ודם לא ישמח בעבודתו מצד שאין בטוח שיקבל עליה שכר, ואף שקבל שכר אין השכר רצוף בהעבודה עצמה, רק בא אחריה ובזה יעבוד בעצב ככל העוסק באמצעיים טרם ישיג את התכלית. לא כן עבודת ד' שהיא עצמה השכר והתכלית—עבודה זו תהיה בשמחה'

EXPLORE: SIMCHA IN DOING MITZVOS

This passuk, the directive of 'עבדו את ד' בשמחה' seems to be in glaring contradiction to another passuk in Tehillim: 'עבדו את ד' ביראה' (תהילים ב:יא)

Q: Which one is it? Should we serve Hashem with יראה or with שמחה?

A: If the exact definition of יראה would be 'fear,' then these two types of avodah—fear and joy—would be incompatible. Fear and joy are, in fact, two emotions that cancel each other out. The actual definition of יראה, however is not 'fear.' It's 'awe.' Awe and joy are, indeed, compatible! They are like two sides of the same coin. Living our lives in awe of Hashem will bring us to serve Him with joy and simcha. יראה and שמחה are not contradictions; they reinforce one another. The Chassam Sofer learns from this passuk that doing a mitzvah with simcha is, in and of itself, an independent obligation. Each mitzvah comes along with its own 'twin mitzva.' The simcha is a mitzvah within itself.



The Chassam Sofer says that the very first mitzvah a boy/girl encounters when becoming bar/bas mitzvah is the mitzvah to serve Hashem b'simcha. (You can pose this as a riddle to your students.)

Serving Hashem with happiness is not just 'extra credit' or a 'nice thing to do.' It's actually at the core of our avodas Hashem.

"תחת אשר לא עבדת את ד' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב, מרב כל" (כח:מו)

Sefer Devarim writes in the passuk: 'Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with happiness and gladness of heart, when all was good' The קללות that are described in תבואה will come onto Klal Yisroel as a result of not serving Hashem with joy.

It was Chofetz Chaim, when writing is prohibited except under pressing circumstances. Despite his busy schedule, the Chofetz Chaim penned a careful letter to the rosh yeshiva of Lomza, Rav Eliezer Shulevits, and sent it to Lomza posthaste.

The contents of the letter were surprising. In the missive was contained only a few terse lines:

Regarding the individual you consulted me about, whether he should be offered the position of mashgiach in your yeshiva, I had originally told you that he was a suitable candidate.

However, I am withdrawing my advice and ask that you don't offer him the position.

(Rav) Yisroel Meir Hakohein Kagan

The rosh yeshiva of Lomza was very surprised. He had gone to consult with the Chofetz Chaim before the Yomim Noraim and asked his opinion about the very same candidate. On that occasion, the Chofetz Chaim had waxed enthusiastic about the young scholar, praising him as a lamdan, a yorei shomayim, and a ba'al middos. What had changed in the interim? And why was this such an important message that it had to be delivered on chol hamoed?

Fortunately, the candidate had not yet been hired, and Rav Leizer did not have to deal with retracting his offer. Still, at the first opportunity, he traveled to Radin to ask the Chofetz Chaim about the letter. The Chofetz Chaim, who guarded every word that emerged from his lips, explained: "When you had asked me if the candidate was an appropriate choice, I had a high opinion of him and felt he would be a role model for the bochurim. However, in the interim he came to see me, and began to krechtz about his life, his difficult financial challenges, etc. When I saw how full of bitterness and negativity he was, I quickly wrote a letter retracting my position. After all, a person who only sees the darkness and constantly focuses on the challenges in his life, to the exclusion of the many blessings, such a person cannot be in a position of leadership, especially for young, impressionable bochurim." [Story originally written by CB Weinfeld and printed in the Yated Ne'eman]

BOTTOM LINE

When we feel Hashem's presence, it brings us to a feeling of simcha. Serving Hashem is not a burden; it's a privilege. Every mitzvah is, in fact, a precious gift that is sent to us by Hakodosh Baruch Hu. Our job is to view life in this positive, grateful frame of mind:

'עבדו את ד' בשמחה באו לפניו ברננה' - Come before Him with jubilation

IMAGINE

A fundraiser is going to solicit funds from one of his wealthy, well-known donors. When he enters the reception area, what is he feeling? Is it happiness? Probably not. He might be anxious, eager, hopeful, or nervous.

When is he happy?

Not when he comes; rather, when he leaves (if he manages to solicit a large sum).

'Someone who comes before a human being to request something will enter with crying and pleading. Only their exit will be joyous, if indeed their request was fulfilled. Someone who comes before Hashem, however, enters with joy, because they are sure that He will fulfill their request.'

מלבי"ם: 'הבא לפני בשר ודם לבקש דבר יבוא בבכי ובזעקה- רק יציאתו תהיה ברננה, אם מלא שאלתו. אבל הבא לפני ד' יבוא ברננה כי בודאי חמלא שאלתו'

'דעו כי ד' הוא אלקים'

'כל אדם שיש בו דעה כאילו נבנה בית המקדש בימיו' (ברכות לג:א)

The Gemara in Berachos states: 'Every person that has 'deiah', it's as if the Beis Hamikdash was built in their day.'

Q: What is the meaning of 'דעה' and why is it of such magnitude and importance?

STORY

R' Yechiel Perr shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Far Rockaway) once visited a Holocaust survivor who had escaped Auschwitz. When Rav Perr used the word "know" in a question, the man challenged him: "What does it mean to know?"

He then shared his story. After escaping from Auschwitz, he sought to save thousands of Jews from the horrors of the camps and arranged a meeting with a Bishop who had the power to help. Dressed up in identical garb to the Bishop, he described the horrors of the camps in graphic detail. Though the Bishop responded with polite shock, it was clear he wasn't truly grasping the reality.

The man decided to change his approach. He then related to the Bishop that he saw someone dressed exactly like the Bishop, describing every detail of how the Bishop was dressed. He then graphically illustrated how they had placed this man in a box and burned him alive. At that moment, the Bishop fainted. Once revived, he fainted again. When he finally came to, the man said, "Then he knew. Before, he did not."

200,000 Jews were saved as a result.

CONCLUSION

Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l writes that "dei'ah" means "true sensory awareness" or "emotional recognition" (of Hashem). "Dei'ah" will impact our thoughts, speech, and actions. If we have true awareness of Hashem, we have everything, because dei'ah will lead us to Torah, mitzvos, treating our brothers and sisters with love and respect, not speaking negatively of others, honesty and integrity, and working on refining our character traits.

This is what we mean when we say 'דעו כי ד' הוא אלקים' - it's the type of knowledge that is bone-deep and impacts the way we live.

'ד' הוא אלקים'

Meforshim comment that this perek of thanksgiving uses both the name of אלקים and י-ק-ו. One ('ד') signifies chessed, and one (אלקים) signifies din. This is to show us that whether something looks like din or chessed, we should realize that because it's coming from Hashem, by definition it's obviously for our ultimate good. The 'ד' of רחמים and the אלקים of דין are, in actuality, one and the same.

'הוא עשנו'

R' Avigdor Miller zt"l explains that when the לשון of עשה, עשה - to create something, is used, it indicates something that is created for a specific purpose.

In this case, the purpose is for the previously stated 'הוא אלקים' - that we gain knowledge of הקב"ה and disseminate this knowledge.

Like the passuk in ישיעה says:

'עם זו יצרתי לי תהילתי יספרו' - 'This nation I created for Myself- so that they will tell over My praise

'ולו [ולא] אנחנו'

There are two different homonyms written over here, indicating two different meanings of this passuk.

1. ולא אנחנו - It is not us

שלא נוכל לומר כוחנו ועוצם ידינו עשה לנו את החיל הזה

2. ולו אנחנו - We are His

מיוחדים אנחנו לו להיות נקראים עמו וצאן מרעינו

The Chofetz Chaim has a beautiful mashal to show how both possible phrases of ולו אנחנו and ולא אנחנו can actually tie together to bring about one cohesive meaning:

MASHAL

חפץ חיים: שני אנשים הלכו בדרך ופתאום אחד מישש בכיסו וראה שחסר לו כסף, אז תפס את חברו. אומר לו: החזר לי הכסף שגנבת ממני. אמר לו חברו: מניין אתה יודע שאני גנבתי ממך, וכי ראית בעיניך? אמר לו: וכי אני צריך לראות? הלא מובן שאתה גנבת, כי איש אחר לא היה כאן, ואני לא גנבתי מעצמי את הכסף, ואם כן ודאי גבלי שום ספק- אתה גנבת!

Two people were walking along their way when, suddenly, one reached into his pocket and realized that he was missing some of his money. He immediately grabbed his friend and demanded, 'Return the money that you stole from me!' His friend responded, 'How do you know that it was me who stole from you? Did you actually see it happen?' To which the man responded, 'I didn't have to see it happen to know that it was you. It's obvious that you're the one who stole the money, because there's no one else here! Since it's pretty clear that I didn't steal it from myself, there's no shred of a doubt that it was you!

CONCLUSION

This is how we can tie the two meanings of this passuk together:

Since 'לא אנחנו' - it is definitely not us who create ourselves and provide for all of our own needs, therefore 'לו אנחנו' - we conclusively, without a doubt are completely Hashem's.

‘עמו וצאן מרעיתו’

IMAGINE

When you picture a flock of sheep grazing in the pasture, what comes to mind? Which characteristics do you picture? What is the relationship between the sheep and their shepherd? I'll bet you have never seen a sheep with anxiety!

Sheep are not in charge of their own lives. The shepherd places them and pastures them wherever he sees fit. The sheep are not afraid, regardless of hunger, danger, or unsafe environments. The shepherd's constant presence provides the whole flock with a sense of safety and security.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When we recognize that we are not responsible for our creation, our existence, or our successes (as a people and as individuals), then we truly belong to Hashem and are “עמו”- His nation. We are His when we internalize and live with the דעה, the sensory and emotional recognition, that we are His sheep and He is the Shepherd Who is always watching over us with His hashgachah pratis. [based on HaRav Avigdor Miller zt”l, Praise, My Soul!]

OPTIONAL

ACTIVITY

Have the students keep a 'Hashgacha Pratis' diary for a week or two. Each time they see an instance of hashgachas Hashem clearly in their own lives, they can record it in their diary. At the end of the week, students can bring in their diaries and design a cover or share some of their entries with the class. Perhaps the class can create a bulletin board and each student will choose one entry to design and write up to place on the bulletin board—a collective display of עמו וצאן מרעיתו'.

פסוק ד'

‘באו שערינו בתודה חצרותינו בתהילה’

When someone came to bring his תודה, קרבן תודה, he would first enter 'שערינו' - the gates of ירושלים, then he would approach 'חצרותינו' – referring to the עזרה.

Q: What is the difference between 'תודה' and 'תהילה'?

A: תודה is an expression of recognizing Hakadosh Baruch Hu in our own personal lives, whereas תהילה is an expression of הכרת ד' on a broader, global scale.

Before we can join others in praising Hashem in a broader praise, we must first truly feel that He is our own personal Hashem Who takes special care of us and is involved in every aspect of our personal lives. In a sense, it is much easier to praise Hashem for “all” and see His control over the world in general, than to recognize His control and goodness in every aspect of my own life, which includes events and life settings that are both sweet and bitter, but that are all for my benefit and best interest.

R' Yechezkel Abramski zt”l would pause as he entered his house in the evening and contemplate anything and everything his wife had done for him that day. Only then would he enter the house (presumably with words of thanks and praise).

‘באו שערינו בתודה’ - by contemplating everything that Hakadosh Baruch Hu does for us on a daily basis, we will be brought to the proper feelings of praise and תודה.

‘הודו לו ברכו שמו’

Any help, advice, refufo that a person receives are really all from Hashem. Yes, we have to thank the messenger, the doctor, or the financial advisor, but at all times we have to be aware that it's really all coming from Hashem.

‘כי טוב ד' לעולם חסדו ועד דור ודור אמונתו’

The Malbim explains that this passuk includes both types of הנהגות ד':

1. חסדו – Hashem's miraculous actions
2. אמונתו - Hashem's 'regular' actions

‘כי טוב ד'’

Hashem is the only One Who actually knows what is best for us. Human beings can try their best, they can attempt to help us, but they don't know that their help will end up being for our benefit. Sometimes it may turn out to our detriment! Ultimately, only Hashem has the birds-eye view of our lives and trajectories and He knows which chassadim will be beneficial for us.

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Write about a time when you were able to see, retroactively, how something upsetting/difficult that happened to you ended up really being for your benefit.

Though we are not always able to see it, knowing that whatever Hashem does is for our best can help us through times that are difficult or hard to understand.

יהי כבוד ה'

IN THIS TEFILLAH

*We elaborate on how כבוד שמים
proliferates in this world due to the
greatness of Hashem's הנהגות.*

NOTE TO TEACHER

The material for this tefilla includes multiple stories pertaining to the topics at hand. For a refreshing variation, you can choose different students to prepare the stories beforehand and then present them to the class at the right time. Alternatively, you can choose students to bring in their own stories relating to the topics you assign.

ANTICIPATORY SET

There was a tremendous crash on one of the major interstate highways. It was a multi-vehicle collision with numerous casualties and injuries. When medical personnel appeared on the scene and began to assess the damages, they classified one particular person as being severely injured and in critical condition—even though he only had sustained one injury.

Which part of the body do you think is the most dangerous one to injure?

Which kind of injury would place someone in the category of 'critical?'

This person injured his spine.
The spine is the collection of bones that connects the brain and the rest of the limbs in the body. The brain is the organ that allows the rest of the limbs to carry out their respective functions. A person

whose limbs are in fine working order can still be severely handicapped—if his brain function is impaired. Even though we may not realize this, because everything happens so quickly and instinctively, the brain is responsible for sending out the messages and synapses to the rest of our limbs to move and cooperate.

When the brain is functioning properly, the rest of the other limbs can also function properly—unless there is damage to the spine. If the spine is damaged, the person will be crippled, ר"ל.

THE BOTTOM LINE

יהי כבוד is the 'spine' of tefilla—its function is to connect our minds and hearts with the tefillos that come next: **אשרי** and the **הללוקה**'s. (This will be further explained by the following mashal and nimshal.)

Have the students count the number of pesukim in יהי כבוד —there are 18 pesukim, corresponding to the 18 vertebrae in the spine! Just like the spine is a most critical, crucial part of the body, we must realize the immense impact that יהי כבוד, the 'spine' has on our tefillah.

MASHAL

A pious and chashuve talmid chacham sat down to learn in a beis medrash where no one knew him. He sat, unrecognized, in a corner of the room, contentedly learning by himself. After an hour or two, someone approached him and began to speak with him in learning. He quickly realized that this was no simple Yid—he was talking to a talmid chacham! The more time he spent talking with him in learning, the more his brilliance and depth was revealed. The man came to realize that this was someone who deserved much כבוד and respect—a real talmid chacham!

Building a connection with someone and getting to know them enables us to accord them the respect they deserve.

NIMSHAL

So it is when we daven Shacharis. Our aim is to praise and laud the greatness of Hashem through the tefilla of **אשרי** and the subsequent **הללוקה**'s. To achieve this, we first have to form a connection in order to be able to fully recognize Hashem's greatness and strengthen our perception of **שבחים**. How would we be able to properly and adequately praise someone without appreciating the extent of their importance?

Only once we recognize **שבחים** and **גדלות** through the recitation of the tefilla of **יהי כבוד** can we come to properly praise Hashem in **אשרי** and the **הללוקה**'s.

THE CONTENT

Each of the eighteen pesukim in this tefilla can be categorized according to four main repeating themes:

1. הנהגת ד' בעולם תמיד לטובה, גם כשזה נראה רע בעיני בני אדם
Hashem's actions are all for our best, even if they might seem bad in our eyes
2. ד' משגיח על בני"י בהשגחה פרטית ומיוחדת
Hashem is always watching over Am Yisroel with unique, specific supervision
3. ד' מגן על עם ישראל מפני הגויים
Hashem protects Klal Yisroel from the goyim
4. תאור על מלכות ד' ונצחיותו
Descriptions of Hashem's rulership and His infinity

הנהגת ד' בעולם תמיד לטובה	ד' משגיח על בני"י בהשגחה פרטית ומיוחדת
יהי שם ד' מבורך...ועד עולם	ד' בשמים...כסאו ומלכותו בכל משלה
ממזרח שמש עד מבואו	כי בחר ד' בציון...כי יעקב בחר לו ק-ה ישראל לסגלתו
עצת ד' לעולם...מחשבות לבו לדור ודור	כי לא יטוש ד' עמו
	והוא רחום יכפר עון...ולא יעיר כל חמתו
ד' מגן על עם ישראל מפני הגויים	תאור על מלכות ד' ונצחיותו
ד' הפיר עצת גויים	יהי כבוד ד' לעולם
רבות מחשבות בלב איש	רם על כל גויים ד'
ועצת ד'...תקום	ד' שמך לעולם ד' זכרך לדור ודור
ד' מלך...אבדו גויים מארצו	ישמחו השמים...ויאמרו בגויים ד' מלך
	ד' ימלוך לעולם ועד
	כי הוא אמר ויהי הוא צוה ויעמוד

הנהגת ד' בעולם תמיד לטובה

SECTION ONE

- ממזרח שמש עד מבואו

We are thanking Hashem for everything that happens to us—whether it seems to us to be something positive ('מזרח שמש' -like the sun shining) or whether it seems to us to be something difficult ('עד מבואו' - like the sun setting). This analogy alludes to the idea that even when things in our lives seem to be hard and negative, we have to recognize that everything that Hashem does is ultimately for our good.

The emunah that beats in the heart of every Yid is what enables him to give thanks even in times of pain. Even through difficulty and darkness, he can attain the expression of 'שם ד' מבורך מעתה ועד עולם'.

STORY

A man took his wife and children on a day trip to enjoy a hike surrounded by the beauty of nature. The family was calmly strolling along their way when suddenly, a large, poisonous snake appeared from behind a boulder, slithered over to the man, and sank its fangs deep into his foot. Snake bite!

Within minutes, the area started to swell to alarming proportions, and the man began to feel ill and woozy—side effects of the snake's venom which was now running through his blood. His wife quickly contacted the park staff and Hatzalah, who arrived on the scene and rushed the man to the nearest hospital.

His family was in a state of shock and turmoil. They had gone out together to enjoy a relaxing day, and now their father's life was hanging in the balance!

The doctors and nurses worked round the clock until they were finally able to stabilize the man's condition. After a few days under close observation, he started to regain his strength and feel more like his old self. Before he was discharged, he was summoned to the office of the hospital's administrator.

'I wanted to share with you the amazing miracle that occurred when you were hospitalized,' the administrator told him. 'When you entered the hospital, the tests we performed on your blood revealed a life-threatening bacteria that was spreading through your body at an alarming rate. Due to the silent nature of this disease, it could have gone undetected until it would have ultimately led to your death.'

The man listened in horrified fascination.

'Unbelievably,' continued the administrator, 'the snake venom that entered your bloodstream destroyed all the harmful cells and got rid of the life-threatening bacteria! Your 'deadly' snake bite was actually what saved your life...'

When we say **ממזרח שמש עד מבואו**, we are acknowledging that even the things that look 'dark' to us are really all from Hashem and are ultimately for our good.

-עצת ה' לעולם תעמוד מחשבות לבו **לדור ודור**

Hashem's 'plans' and 'thoughts' and 'strategies' are all for our best, even if we are not able to recognize it. Sometimes we are able to see the benefits immediately, while sometimes it may take many generations ('לדור ודור') for the good to be recognized. Only after many years (and sometimes not even then) will we perhaps be able to see how all the 'puzzle pieces' fit together to form the complete picture.

STORY

With the outbreak of World War II, many German Jews tried to escape to England via ship. They left their homes, most of their belongings, and almost everything they owned behind in Germany and boarded a boat with but a few of their most treasured possessions.

When the boat finally reached the shores of England, the English government refused entry to the new immigrants and did not allow the ship to dock. They did, however, come up with a sinister plan for getting rid of the refugees—instead of sending them directly back to Germany to suffer at the hands of their German oppressors, they decided to re-direct the ship to Australia via the Atlantic Ocean. They took a large group of their own English prisoners and sent them aboard the ship to serve as the ship's staff. These prisoners and lowlifes would act as the captains, admirals, and crew, and be in charge of the Jewish German refugees.

This would allow them to kill two birds with one stone—they would get rid of their own prisoners, while ensuring the torture and eventual death of the German Jews aboard, who would be subjugated to the will of their captors. There was no doubt in anyone's mind—this ship would definitely not make it all the way to Australia. As soon as the Germans caught wind of the fact that an English ship was headed for safer shores, they would follow and capture the ship and punish the passengers accordingly.

The journey began, and the plan seemed to be working perfectly. The Jews aboard suffered taunting and abuse from the English prisoners who had been placed in charge of them. At one point, to increase the pain they were inflicting on their captives, the English 'crew' commanded all the passengers to throw their belongings overboard.

The passengers were heartbroken. These possessions were their last few ties to the lives they had once led. They contained pictures, treasured memories, and valuable documents that they had brought with them as they fled for their lives. Left with no choice, they dumped every last one of their belongings overboard, crying bitter tears of regret and anguish. Now nothing remained of their previous lives. They had reached rock bottom.

Astoundingly, defying all logic, the ship arrived safely in Australia, unharmed by the Germans. The passengers disembarked and tried to put their horrific journey behind them. Perhaps they would now be able to start over, to start fresh new lives in Australia.

It was only years later that the truth about the ship was revealed. How did an English ship make it all the way to Australia without attracting the attention of the Germans? When the ship left England, it was immediately followed by the Germans. When the English prisoners forced the passengers to throw their belongings overboard, the Germans hung back and retrieved the discarded documents that had been thrown into the ocean. They were shocked to discover that the documents were in German! Immediately, the Germans realized that it was their own citizens aboard the 'English' boat and allowed them to travel safely to Australia, unharmed.

What had seemed to be the hardest of travails—giving up their precious documents and belongings—was actually what had saved their lives.

We praise Hashem לדור ודור, because sometimes it may be years or generations until we get to see the 'full picture' of His greatness—and sometimes, not even then!

ה' בשמים הכין בסאו ומלכותו בכל משלה

Hashem's reigns supreme even above the seven **רקיעים**. Despite this, Hashem's hashgacha over His nation and all His creations is complete—down to the tiniest detail. 'מלכותו בכל משלה' - His rulership is sovereign over **all**. **אפיקורסים** and **goyim** may believe in a Higher Power—but they believe that He is too exalted to 'lower Himself' to be involved in the day-to-day lives of His creations down on Earth. We know, however, that even though Hashem is supreme, exalted, and omnipresent, He is still **משגיח** on every single aspect of every single creation's existence in the lower realms—and over Klal Yisroel in particular.

כי לא יטוש ה' עמו

Hashem will never abandon His nation. Throughout all the generations, for the duration of all time—He has been and will always be with us forever.

כי בחר ה' בציון אווה למושב לו כי יעקב בחר לו ק-ה ישראל לסגלתו

The word 'אווה' comes from the **לשון** of 'תאוה' - desire. Hashem's will and desire is to rebuild Yerushalayim (ציון) and the Beis Hamikdash so that His malchus can disseminate from there to the entire rest of the world. Hashem also chose Klal Yisroel to be His special nation and His precious people—like a treasure that is beloved and constantly watched over ('לסגלתו').

והוא רחום יכפר עון ... ולא יעיר כל חמתו

This phrase expresses an additional chessed in the way Hashem acts with Klal Yisroel:

MASHAL

A rebellious prince committed an act of treason that was harmful to his father's kingdom. The prescribed punishment for treason at the time was for the offender to be stoned in public. The king, known to be a fair and reasonable ruler, knew that he had to follow protocol, but at the same time was understandably reluctant to want to carry out this harsh sentence on his own son!

After consulting with his numerous advisors, he reached a solution: He would mete out the proper punishment, but would do so in a way that would enable his son, the prince, to survive and escape with his life. The king took the huge boulders that were generally used in stonings and had them ground up into smaller fragments—the size of small rocks and pebbles. When these smaller rocks were thrown upon his son, they stung and injured him, but did not kill him.

NIMSHAL

This is like the chess that Hashem performs with us: Instead of punishing a person with a severe, unsurvivable punishment, He gives him his punishments slowly and gradually—each time a bearable, sustainable צער, to enable him to overcome it and survive.

ד' מגן על עם ישראל מפני הגויים

SECTION THREE

ה' הפיר עצת גויים הניא מחשבות עמים

The goyim are constantly plotting and conspiring to do harm to Klal Yisroel, but Hashem foils their plots and thwarts their plans so that they will not come to fruition.

There is an inherent difference between עצות and מחשבות. An עצה is a well-thought-out plan that is thoroughly prepared and outlined. A מחשבה, on the other hand, is a random, spontaneous thought that pops into a person's mind. Our enemies utilize both of these—the spontaneous and the deliberate plans—to try and harm Klal Yisroel. Hashem protects us from them all.

The Maharal of Prague once encountered a frightened, young non-Jewish boy crying in the streets of the marketplace. He had failed to sell all the rolls his father had baked, and the boy was too afraid to return home with a basketful of rolls and not enough coins from the day's sales. The Maharal took pity on the child and bought all the remaining products from him so that he could go home calmly and happily.

Years later, in the dead of the night, there was a knock on the Maharal's door. It was this same boy who had once been the beneficiary of the Maharal's kindness. He had come late at night, in secret, in order to repay the favor and warn the Maharal of an impending attack on the Jewish community: His father, the baker, planned to poison all the bread he would bake for the Jews to buy on חג אסרו of Pesach. Upon ingesting the poisoned goods, all the Jews would die and it would cause a terrible, widespread destruction of the entire Jewish community of Prague!

The Maharal came up with a brilliant counter-plot: He informed the Jewish community that a mistake had been made on the calendar, and Pesach was really supposed to last a full extra day. This way, no one was able to buy the poisoned bread, and the secret of who had revealed the plan would not come out, either. The murderous plot was foiled, and the Yidden of Prague were saved. All because of a young boy who was able to go home with a pocket full coins, thanks to the kindness and caring of the Maharal of Prague.

(This story became a well-known children's tale by Shmuel Kunda, 'The Longest Pesach.')

During the Intifada in Eretz Yisroel a few years ago, the Arabs came up with a new kind of terrorist attack—car ramming at bus stops. They would choose a well-populated bus stop and ram a car into the crowd, injuring and killing tens of people in this way.

For one specific attack, they chose a well-known bus stop in the neighborhood of Belz. They planned the attack to take place at a certain time on Sunday, when the bus stop was usually full of avreichim who had just finished their weekly shiur given by one of the well-liked maggidim. That particular Sunday, however, the bus stop was empty. The participants of the shiur had gotten a last-minute message that the maggid shiur was feeling ill and would not be giving a shiur that day...

It is incumbent upon us to realize the countless times and ways Hashem protects us from the devious plots of our enemies. From the few mind-boggling instances we get to see, we can draw inspiration and recognition that there are so many more that we'll never even know about!

תאור על מלכות ד' ונצחיותו

SECTION FOUR

רם על כל גויים ה'

Hashem is more exalted and praised than all the praises that are attributed to Him by the nations of the world. And what is this praise? That Hashem's malchus exists forever—past, present, and future—and He is constantly watching over His nation.

ה' שמך לעולם ה' זכרך לדור ודור

Hashem's abilities are without limit and His ruling is good for all creations. He acts with chessed and in the mode of 'לפנים משורת הדין'. As a result of all this...
'ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ ויאמרו בגויים ד' מלך'

A man desperately needed to renovate his house in order to meet the needs of his growing family. He was planning an extension, but in order to do so needed various permits from the municipal department and financial help from the bank. He asked around and did some research until he was given the name of a well-known askan who had many connections, both in the municipality and the banking network. What a relief! The askan agreed to help him smooth out the details necessary for him to complete the extension on his house.

As the weeks went by, the askan worked tirelessly, procuring documents and permits, securing bank loans and guarantees, etc. They were almost at the finish line, when suddenly, the askan fell ill. He relayed his sincerest apologies, but alas—the final few documents that were necessary for the construction to begin had not yet been obtained. The entire plan was left in limbo...

One cannot compare the abilities of Hakadosh Baruch Hu to those of a human being. Hashem is timeless, infinite, and eternal, and His capabilities are limitless.

IN CONCLUSION

The tefilla starts off with the words 'יהי כבוד' —because that is the ultimate goal of this tefilla. That we come to a recognition of כבוד שמים through understanding and enumerating various examples of Hashem's glory and honor. Through this we can connect and relate to the greatness of Hashem, and thus come to praise Him properly in the subsequent tefillos of Ashrei and the הללוקה's.

אשרי יושב ביתך

IN THIS TEFILLAH

*We enumerate the many
kindnesses in the way
Hakadosh Baruch Hu runs
the world and thank Him for
the limitless bounty that He
provides for all living creations,
infinitely.*

ANTICIPATORY SET

Any activator that portrays the idea that living as a Yid is the only true אושר in life.

EXAMPLE: Every student receives an envelope containing a blank check. Students have a few minutes to write out the check as they would if they wanted to gift someone specific with something that would give them great joy. (A professional camera for a best friend, a trip to Eretz Yisroel for a mother, etc.) As the students share what they wrote on their checks, the class will collectively analyze each girl's gift by attempting to answer these 3 questions:

- *Do you have the resources/ability to be able to actually give this gift?*
- *Are you one thousand percent sure that this gift will make the recipient happy?*
- *Will those feelings of happiness stay with your recipient forever, or will the joy fade over time?*

Through this activity, students will realize that even gifts chosen with care and love cannot be perfect, though they may bring temporary happiness.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In the tefilla of Ashrei, we reference a gift that does fulfill all three of those criteria—the only ‘gift’ that is accessible to every Jewish person, that also causes immeasurable and everlasting joy—the gift of being a Yid. אשרי העם שככה לו - אשרי העם. How fortunate is the nation that this is their lot—how fortunate is the nation that has Hashem as their G-d!

THE CONTENT

Q: In what specific sequence are the verses of אשרי written, and why?

The Gemara accords significance to the perek of 'Tehilla L'Dovid' (Ashrei) because it contains all the 22 letters of the Aleph-Bais, which contain within them all the דיבורים. Thus, when someone says this perek to praise Hashem, he is showing that all the דיבורים are included in his praises.

“בגמרא נתנו מעלה למזמור תהילה לדוד דאית ביה (יש בו) אלף-בית, כי באלו כ”ב אותיות נכללים כל הדיבורים. ואם כן שמשבחים לה’... הרי הוא מורה שכל הדיבורים כלולים כולם בשיר ושבח...” (יערות דבש)

MASHAL

The king's loyal servant, out of his deep love for the king, wished to praise him. He was hesitant, however, for he could not think of praise that would be adequate to fully describe the king's greatness. After much thought, he came up with a plan. He took a blank sheet of paper and presented it to the king. In response to the king's bewildered look, the servant explained, 'I could not find the words that would adequately encapsulate the king's greatness. Therefore, I decided to present the king with this blank sheet—an infinite canvas to testify to your infinite greatness.'

THE BOTTOM LINE

Hashem's praise is infinite; it's impossible to delineate His greatness. Therefore, we praise Hashem through the letters of the Aleph-Bais, which form a blank canvas to express the infinity of His praise.

CATEGORIZING THE PESUKIM

The pesukim that begin with the letters ב-ז and the pesukim that begin with the letters ח-ט all fall under the general category of praising גדלותו ה'. The pesukim that begin with the letters ט-ח and ס-ת all fall under the general category of praising עם בריותיו וחסד.

Teacher hands out a chart to students to complete with the pesukim from Ashrei.

There are two main sub-categories of praises of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

After the charts are completed, teach the פירוש המלים. Students can then fill in the appropriate 'General Topic' that each category of pesukim represents.

<div>הנהגת ה' בחסד וברחמים</div> <div>GENERAL CATEGORY B</div>	אותיות ח-ט	אותיות ב-ז	<div>מלכות ה' וגדלותו</div> <div>GENERAL CATEGORY A</div>
		<div>'בכל יום אברכין..'</div> <div>'גדול ה' ומהלל מאד..'</div>	
אותיות ס-ת	אותיות י-מ		

מלכות ה' ודגולתו

GENERAL CATEGORY A

In the included pesukim, we praise Hashem's sovereignty and greatness, and delineate how both nature and miracles are attributed only to Him. We describe Hashem's interactions with the world in a general sense, how Hashem rules with kindness and compassion, and is Sovereign overall.

<p>"ארוממן אלוקי המלך" <i>We ponder the glory of Hashem</i></p>	<p>רום - לרומם, להעלות <i>to exalt, glorify</i></p>
<p>"ואברכה שמך לעולם... בכל יום אברכה" <i>We bless and praise Hashem every day and forever-forever</i></p>	<p>ברך - לברך, להלל <i>to bless, praise</i></p>
<p>"ולגדולתו אין חקר" <i>It is impossible to explain and investigate the depth of Hashem's greatness because it is endless. We cannot understand Hashem's essence or His ways through human analysis, for He is infinite.</i></p>	<p>חקר - לחקור, לברר <i>to investigate, to clarify, to explain</i></p>
<p>"וגבורותיך יגידו" <i>Each generation teaches the next generation the strength of Hashem's deeds, referring to miracles defying the realm of nature</i></p>	<p>גבר - להתגבר, חוזק <i>to be mighty, strength</i></p>
<p>"כבוד הודך" <i>Hashem's glory manifests itself in the beauty of creation</i></p>	<p>הוד - יופי, רושם <i>beauty, impression</i></p>
<p>"דברי נפלאותיך אשיחה" <i>We speak about Hashem's wondrous kindness</i></p>	<p>שוחח - לשוחח, לדבר <i>to speak</i></p>
<p>"ועזוז נוראותיך יאמרו" <i>We tell about the awesome power of Hashem's deeds</i></p>	<p>עוז - חוזק, עוצמה <i>power, strength</i></p>
<p>"טובך יביעו" <i>We compare Hashem's goodness to a flowing spring</i></p>	<p>נבע - זורם, מתגבר <i>flowing</i></p>
<p>"יודוך ה' כל מעשיך" <i>We praise and thank Hashem for all His deeds</i></p>	<p>ידה - להודות, לשבח <i>Thank, praise</i></p>
<p>"הדר מלכותו" <i>Hashem's kingdom is glorious and splendid. This refers to the miracle of nature</i></p>	<p>הדר - פאר רב <i>Magnificent, splendor</i></p>
<p>"כל עולמים" <i>Hashem is Sovereign over all the worlds – above and below</i></p>	<p>עולם - עולם <i>World</i></p>

ACTIVITY

Display various political ad campaigns on the board. Can be a mixture of newspaper clippings, bumpers stickers, etc.

Call on individual students to read the different promises the candidates write to encourage people to vote for them. Ask students "Is the politician guaranteed to do as he promises? Why or why not?" Guide students to realize that the politician, aside from having his own agenda, must always balance the wants and needs of individuals with the general needs and interests of the government. A government that is too restrictive does not listen to the people at all; however, a government that is too permissive cannot run the country.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In contrast, Hashem's sovereignty is perfect. For Hashem, these two factors do not contradict each other. Hashem can lead the world **בחוֹזֶק וּבגְבוּרָה**, as we just learned in the above pesukim. In the following pesukim, we will see how simultaneously, Hashem directs each individual creation with kindness and mercy.

הנהגת ה' בחסד וברחמים

GENERAL CATEGORY B

In the included pesukim, we praise the way Hashem simultaneously directs each creation with kindness and mercy.

This section describes the miracles inherent in what looks to us like 'nature.' They are wonders we must thank Hashem for despite the fact that they seem 'ordinary' to us. One purpose of Pesukei D'zimrah is to develop our awareness and appreciation for the daily miracles we are gifted with.

MASHAL

In a little shteeble, the minyan had just finished davening. The mispallelim were getting ready to leave when Yankel brought out a bottle of schnapps, made a loud, fervent l'chaim, and offered schnapps to all the mispallelim.

"What's the occasion?" the mispallelim wondered aloud. "We usually have l'chaim only on Shabbos or Yom Tov!"

Yankele smiled and replied, "On my way home from shul yesterday, as I was crossing the main road, a car sped past a stop sign and crashed into me. I was rushed to the hospital, unconscious. Yet, just a few hours later, I was released without injury. I must thank Hashem for this."

Upon hearing this, the mispallelim joined in a joyous l'chaim.

The next day, just after davening, it was Shloimy who brought out schnapps and offered l'chaim.

"What's the occasion?" the mispallelim marveled, scarcely believing their shteeble could be zocheh to two outright nissim in one week.

"On my way home from shul yesterday, I crossed the main road safely; I made it home without any car hitting me. Isn't that also a neis?"

NIMSHAL

Every second of our existence is infused with Hashem's loving kindness. Chazal instituted Pesukei D'zimrah to focus on these "ordinary" miracles and enable us to thank Hashem.



In Ashrei, we say *טוב ה' לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו* – Hashem bestows His kindness on every single creation. There is a well-known story, which was composed as a song by R' Yom Tov Ehrlich, that brings out the idea that even the tiniest creation is loved and cared for by Hashem.

THE LITTLE LEAF

(adapted from R' Yom Tov Ehrlich's song 'Di Bletele')

A tree stands, tall and high,
Branches reaching for the sky
A little leaf, without a sound
A tzaddik who is passing by
Stops and asks the little leaf, 'Why?'
'What made you drop from your abode
And lie here in the road?'
Says little leaf, 'Don't ask me,
I am not the authority
The twig I was on gave a sudden shake
It was more than I could take.
'Twig, twig, O authority,
Perhaps you can explain to me
Why you gave a sudden shake,
More than the leaf could take?'
Says the twig, 'Don't ask me,
I am not the authority;
The wind gave a sudden whoosh
And blew the little leaf loose.'
'Wind, wind, O authority,
Perhaps you can explain to me,
Why you gave a sudden whoosh
And blew the little leaf loose?'
Says the wind, 'Don't ask me,
I am not the authority;
My angel told me what to do,
So with all my might I blew'
'Angel, angel, O authority,
Perhaps you can explain to me,
Why you told the wind what to do,

And mightily it blew?'
Says the angel, 'Don't ask me,
I am not the authority;
The Creator of me and you
Told me what to do'
'Creator, Creator, O Authority,
Perhaps you can explain to me,
Why the little leaf is shaken free
And falls down from its tree?'
The Creator reveals His inner plan
And makes it known to man;
Take the little leaf in your hand,
And you will understand.
See the worm lying there,
He was suffering and in despair,
He was up there on the tree
Breathing heavily,
The rays of the sun were so intense
His discomfort was immense.
"Creator, mercy!" was his plea,
'The sun is roasting me!'
So I commanded the angel right away
To send the wind along its way
And the twig began to sway
And the little leaf was torn away,
And so the sequence was complete,
Shielding the worm from burning heat,
And for the tiny worm,
Sleep was never so sweet....

THE BOTTOM LINE

It is incumbent upon us to seek the infinite miracles embedded in our everyday lives. When we consciously and constantly revel in Hashem's goodness, we will become filled with love and gratitude toward Hashem. This strengthens our bond with Hashem, causing deep joy to permeate our hearts. This is the purpose of Pesukei D'zimrah, and of Ashrei in particular.

"כל האומר תהלה לדוד (אשרי) בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא" (ברכות ד:ב)

A person who says Mizmor l'David every day is promised a portion in Olam Haba. This incredible reward is not given simply for saying the words.

"בשעה שאומר האדם תהלה לדוד יתבונן בתוכן הפסוקים המספרים גודל שבחו של ה' ויבוא להתחזק באמונת ה' ובעבודתו ועל ידי כך יירש עולם הבא" (רבינו בחיי)

When a person says Ashrei, he should ponder the meaning of the words, which are praises of Hashem. This will strengthen his belief in Hashem and he will come to strengthen himself in his avodas Hashem. In this way, he will be zocheh to Olam Haba.

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Read several everyday scenarios depicting the kindness of Hashem. For each scenario, have students find the appropriate possuk/pesukim from Ashrei describing this kindness:

- As you sit down to take a difficult final, you daven Hashem to help you pass. Indeed, you do well.
→ **קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו**
- You forgot your briefcase on the bus. After several anxious minutes, your briefcase is found.
→ **טוב ה' לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו**
- On a hiking trip, standing at the peak of a mountain, surveying the picturesque landscapes, you are filled with awe at Hashem's creation.
→ **הדר כבוד הודך**
- You read an article about a unique phenomenon of a particular plant.
→ **ולגדולתו אין חקר**
- Your grandfather tells you stories of Nissim he experienced as a child.
→ **דור לדור ישבח מעשיו**
- A woman you know seeks a job which is suitable for her needs. Within a few days, she finds a job which works out perfectly!
→ **עיני כל אליך ישברו ואתה נותן להם את אכלם בעתו**
- A man receives a desperately needed promotion and accompanying raise at work.
→ **רצון יראיו יעשה**

הללוך-ה: קמ"ו

IN THIS TEFILLAH

*We delineate various differences
between mankind and Hashem.*

*By understanding the limits of
human capabilities versus the
infinite and boundless abilities of
Hakadosh Baruch Hu, we are able
to praise Him better for all that He
does.*

ANTICIPATORY SET

Any activity/story/example that shows how expectations that are dependent on others can many times end in disappointment, from any number of varying factors.

EXAMPLE:

The Rosh Yeshiva sits at his desk, poring over financial documents for the yeshiva. The payroll, expenses, bills, and documents are spread out before him, a mountain of seemingly insurmountable debt that he has no idea how to even approach. He sits, lost in thought, for a few long moments, wondering what his next step should be.

He stands up and makes his way toward one of his trusted secretaries. 'Please go over our list of previous yeshiva donors and choose a few that we can re-call upon to solicit donations for this month.'

The secretary complies and selects three potential benefactors. Below is a record of the phone conversations that followed:

(Teacher can choose 2 students to act out each scenario)

Conversation #1

Secretary: Good morning, Mr. Fund, this is the secretary at Yeshivas Ohev Shalom.

Donor: Hi, good morning, what can I do for you?

Secretary: We were very fortunate to have received quite a few generous donations from you in the past, and we were hoping to be מזכה you with the same zchus now...unfortunately the yeshiva is going through some financial hardships...

Donor: Of course, I would really love to help. My heart and my wallet have always been open to your yeshiva. Unfortunately, my business has also been struggling recently. Times are tough, and I don't think I will be able to donate at this time. I hope that when things pick up, I'll once again be able to help you out.

Conversation #2

Secretary: Good morning, Mr. Grant, this is the secretary at Yeshivas Ohev Shalom.

Donor: Oh, you're probably looking to speak to my father, Yaakov Grant. He passed away a few months ago...

Secretary: Oy, I'm so sorry to hear! I was wondering...do you know if he left a donation to our yeshiva as part of his will?

Donor: Um, actually he didn't. Unfortunately, his death was quite sudden. He didn't leave any instructions regarding your yeshiva.

Conversation #3:

Secretary: Good morning, Mr. Banks, this is the secretary at Yeshivas Ohev Shalom.

Donor: Yes, good morning—actually, this is Mr. Banks' secretary speaking. If you want to speak to Mr. Banks himself, you have to set up an appointment.

Secretary: Okay, in that case, let's set up an appointment to speak with him as soon as possible.

(They arrange an appointment, and the secretary goes to speak with Mr. Banks in person.)

Secretary: As you know, you have already donated some very generous sums to our yeshiva in the past. Right now, we are in dire financial straits. Is there any way that you can help us out again?

Mr. Banks: Yes, of course, I am always interested in donating to your yeshiva. Please set up an appointment with my secretary, and she will give you a nice-sized check.

(The secretary shows up at the donor's office, and meets his secretary there.)

Mr. Banks' Secretary: Hi, I am so sorry—Mr. Banks changed his mind. It was a last-minute decision, and for personal reasons, he decided not to give a donation at this time. I'm sorry...

After these three rejections, the Rosh Yeshiva and his secretary feel so disappointed, let down, and hopeless. How were the three situations different in nature?

One donor wanted to help but couldn't; one probably would have helped had he been alive; and one originally thought he wanted to help but then changed his mind.

Have you ever experienced a similar situation—when you put your hopes in someone only to be disappointed and let down? (Students can share their experiences.)

ACTIVITY

Post a 'Classified' job ad or two on the board.

What can you tell me about the candidates that will call/email these places to apply for the jobs that are being advertised?

- They have to have the necessary skills and requirements that the job descriptions specify.
- They are people who are actually interested in trying to procure the advertised positions.

Unfortunately, these two factors don't always go hand in hand....

THE BOTTOM LINE

We see that a few qualifications are necessary in order to be able to receive help from someone: their desire to help; their ability to help; and their need to be alive (obviously). In this perek that we say right after Ashrei, we come to a high level of praise—one where we relate how we have complete and utter reliance on Hakadosh Baruch Hu in every single situation.

THE CONTENT

The perek starts with the words, “הללוהו, הללי נפשי” - our soul, our nefesh that is already connected to all the praises we said in Ashrei, is now continuing to praise Hashem with a more specific praise.

“אהללה לה' בחיי, אזמרה לאלקי בעודי” - Every living being knows that it is impossible to live without Hashem's chessed in this world. In the word בעודי is the word עוד —as long as I am still existing, I will praise Hashem.

Referring back to the opening activity, within this perek are examples of human limitations:

- אין לו תשועה - A person might want to help, but doesn't have the ability to
- תצא רוחו - The word רוח over here refers to desire—a person might not have the desire to help
- ישוב לאדמתו ביום ההוא אבדו אשתונותיו - As much as a person might want to help, when he passes on from this world and returns to the 'land' from where he was created, אבדו אשתונותיו —his good intentions are gone and he can't act on them anymore.

MASHAL

While traveling alone down a deserted road, a man noticed an ominous-looking shadow up ahead. Alarmed, his mind started racing with myriad frightening possibilities—was it a wild animal waiting to attack? A bandit hoping to steal his money? The man inched ahead cautiously, preparing to flee from the as-of-yet indeterminable threat. As he approached, he realized in relief that the shadow was cast by an inflatable character, the sort that often stand outside businesses and stores to advertise sales and the like. He jabbed a finger at the inflatable, releasing the air, and watched in relief as it collapsed in a heap.

NIMSHAL

The danger/strength of the inflatable figure was just an illusion—no more than hot air (literally). Human ability is the same. Although it may seem that a human of flesh and blood has the ability or desire to help, he is only capable to the extent that Hashem allows him to be.

THE BOTTOM LINE

We should not delude ourselves into placing our hopes and beliefs in people; we have to trust and depend completely and only on Hashem to send us the right shaliach. He is the ultimate Helper, Healer, Miracle-Worker, and Savior.

‘Praiseworthy is the one that constantly has Hashem helping him and is aware of the fact that he can only rely on Him. The word ‘שברו’ means ‘his hopes.’

Teacher continues reading in the perek and can create a chart on the board, or students can have their own charts to fill in as they learn the pesukim:

	1	2	3
THE FACTOR	Abilities and skills	Willingness and Desire	Life
HUMAN LIMITS	אין לו תשועה	תצא רוחו	ישוב לאדמתו
EXPLANATION	Capabilities are limited	May not always want to follow through	Cannot help once he passes from this world
HASHEM'S CAPABILITIES	בורא שמים וארץ	השומר אמת	לעולם
EXPLANATION	Hashem created the world and is infinitely capable	Hashem is trustworthy to keep His promises	Hashem exists forever; He is eternal

STORY

There was great simcha in the house—Adina had become a kallah! L'chaim and vort passed in a flurry of great excitement and joy. The household was jubilant, but the father of the kallah was overwhelmed. How would he possibly meet all the new financial demands that had settled on his shoulders? His wife was anxious about the deposits and the shopping and the endless monetary outlays. The new couple would need an apartment, furniture, shaitels...the list went on. What could possibly be done?

In a burst of inspiration, R' Katz visited the business office of a local yeshiva, and asked for the most updated list of yeshiva donors. Maybe he would be successful in soliciting a donation from them as well. The yeshiva politely declined, not wanting to deplete their own sources of funds by allowing another solicitor to 'double-dip' into the same donor pool. They did, however, provide him with an outdated list of previous donors—people who had either stopped donating to the yeshiva or hadn't contributed in a while.

Humming happily, R' Katz penned heartfelt letters to each of the donors on his list and mailed them out with a prayer on his lips. He approached his wife and his daughter and told them both: "We did our hishtadlus. Now we have to remember that everything is in His hands and His hands only; the help will come only from Hashem." And so saying, he returned to the beis medrash and sat down tranquilly at his Gemara.

R' Katz called the yeshiva's business office two weeks later to thank them for the part they had played in the more-than-substantial check he had received from one of the donors on their old list.

They were shocked.

'Mr. Gold gave you a check? He hasn't donated in several years! We heard his business was having financial difficulties...How ever did that happen?' And they gave Mr. Gold a call that very day, hoping to garner a large donation, too!

Mr. Gold explained: 'My daughter had gotten engaged and was approaching the date of her chasuna when she was suddenly diagnosed with a rare and serious illness. The prognosis was dire; our family was in turmoil. I ran to my Rosh Yeshiva to ask for a bracha and advice. He advised me to find a needy kallah who would be getting married on the same day as my daughter and to give her enough money to pay for her entire chasuna. Upon returning home, I found the Katz letter in my mailbox. His daughter's chasuna is on the same day as my daughter's...'

THE BOTTOM LINE

When a person relies solely upon Hakadosh Baruch Hu, his resources are truly unlimited. By recognizing that his hishtadlus is not the metric of his success, a person opens himself up to benefit from the infinite stores of hashgacha pratit that await him.



The מדרש on this perek states:

דרש ר' שמלאי: "אשרי ש-ק-ל יעקב בעזרו" - בשר ודם יש לו פטרון (נדיב), אם שליט במדינה זו אינו שליט באחרת, ואפילו אם תאמר שליט הוא בתבל - שליט הוא ביבשה, שמא שליט הוא בים? אבל הקב"ה שליט בים וביבשה, ומציל מן הים ומן היבשה מן המים ומן האש, מציל מן החרב ומבור אריות כמו שהציל את משה ודניאל..." (ירושלמי)

'...A prince of flesh and blood governs only his own province, not the next; even if he rules the whole land, he doesn't rule the sea. He can patrol the sea, yet he cannot control it. Hashem rules the land and the sea. He can save a person from the sea and from the land; from water and from fire; from sword and from a den of lions—like He did with Moshe and Daniel...'

After we praise Hashem for His infinite abilities in every situation, we go on to enumerate some of the specific kindnesses Hashem does for His creations:

ACTIVITY

Post pictures on the board and have the students match them to the חסדים of Hashem in this perek.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| • Ragged beggar | • עושה משפט לעשוקים |
| • Fundraiser | • נותן לחם לרעבים |
| • Prisoner | • ה' מתיר אסירים |
| • Blind Man | • ה' פוקח עורים |
| • Hunchback | • ה' זוקף כפופים |

Q: Why do these לשונות sound familiar? Where else do we mention these חסדים during tefillah?

These are reminiscent of some of the brachos that we say as part of ברכות השחר. It is important to note that they don't only refer to those who are blind, hunched over, or destitute—these חסדים are bestowed upon us every single day! When we wake up in the morning, Hashem 'opens our eyes' so that we may see; He 'releases the bound' by freeing our limbs from their sleepy stupor; He 'straightens up' those who are bent under the weight of worry.

Then, we mention four more specific categories of people and the way that Hashem interacts with them:

1. ה' אוהב צדיקים
2. ה' שומר את גרים
3. יתום ואלמנה יעודד
4. ודרך רשעים יעוות

Understandably, Hashem loves the tzaddikim and treats them accordingly (1).

Q: How do גרים, orphans, and widows merit this special protection and encouragement?

These are people who have no other form of support; the גר lacks the comfort of his past and the אלמנות and יתומים are bereft of their family support and providers. Hashem, in His infinite kindness, endows them with extra protection and chizuk (2,3).

The רשעים, in contrast, receive a harsh retribution—Hashem disrupts their plans and desires (4).

We end this tefilla with a בקשה that Hashem's sovereignty continue eternally and eventually be recognized by all: "ימלוך ה' לעולם אלוֹקֵינוּ צִיּוֹן"

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY #1

Hang a poster on each of the four walls. Divide students into four groups and assign a wall to each. Have students use a designated amount of time to fill up their poster using phrases from the perek.

- A person's limitations
- Hashem's limitless ability
- Praises of Hashem for His kindness to us
- Hashem's special kindness to the 'needy'

ACTIVITY #2

Have students fill out an 'exit ticket':

I rely solely on Hashem!

Four examples from my own life where I am used to relying on others, but will now try to depend only on Hashem after internalizing this lesson:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

הללוך-ה: קמ"ז

IN THIS TEFILLAH

We contrast times of Galus and times of Geulah. In this perek, David Hamelech describes the wondrous good that will be during the times of Mashiach and how Hashem lovingly guides the world until that time.

ANTICIPATORY SET

Students have a few minutes to jot down and then share aloud their responses to these prompts:

- What is one amazing thing you wish would happen to you someday?
- What is one terrible thing you hope will never happen in your life?

Obviously, we know that human beings are not capable of everything—the only One who can fulfill all our desires and prevent all our fears is Hashem.

Q: If Hashem is our loving Father and truly cares deeply about us, why is it that we are lacking so many things that we desire? Why is it that we may be experiencing painful or unwanted circumstances?

Now we are in Galus, in a time of הסתר פנים. The word גלות itself means 'lack,' of clarity, circumstances, or otherwise. In these times of עקבתא ד'משיחא, we are all lacking various things. Hashem is Omniscient; only He knows what is truly for our benefit.

It is the cloudy פנים הסתר that distorts our vision and doesn't allow us to see the full picture and understand how everything is truly for our best. We keenly feel this lack and look forward to the imminent ביאת גואל, when everything will be revealed and clear again.

THE CONTENT

The first half of the pesukim in this perek pertain to the Geulah and all the good that will happen during those days; the second half of the perek talks about the chessed of Hashem even during Galus.

גאולה

SECTION ONE

This section can be taught by comparing descriptions of זמן הגאולה from the Rambam to corresponding ideas in the pesukim of this perek.

“כי טוב זמרה אלקנו כי נעים נאווה תהילה...”

”נתאוו החכמים והנביאים לימות המשיח שהטובה תהיה מושפעת הרבה....” (רמב"ם)

It is a good thing to praise Hashem, for all the good He gives us now, and even more so for all the good He will give us when Mashiach comes.

Our chachamim and neviim desired the days of Mashiach so that there would be an abundance of good.

There is a distinct difference between the words 'טוב' and 'נעים' that we see in this possuk.

MASHAL

A child wakes up in middle of the night, crying from the pain of a new ear infection. He vigorously resists all the efforts and cajoling of his mother to try and give him medication to dull the pain. Left with no choice, the mother forces the medicine into her child's mouth.

Though the taste may be bitter and unpleasant, the medicine is ultimately for the child's benefit.

NIMSHAL

Hashem is the only One who knows what is truly best for each one of us. Sometimes we may find ourselves with 'bitter' circumstances; we must realize that though they may seem unpleasant, it is ultimately for our good.

This is the difference between 'טוב' and 'נעים': Something that is טוב is something that is ultimately for our benefit though it is not pleasant to endure, and we can't see how it is for our good. נעים, on the other hand, refers to things that are visibly and understandably good and pleasant.

We thank Hashem for all the 'טוב' He gives us during times of Galus, when we can't recognize the benefit, and for the 'נעים' that we will be able to understand once Mashiach comes.

(Girls can share stories of times when things looked unpleasant and ultimately turned out for the good.)

'בונה ירושלים ה' נדחי ישראל יכנס'

"המלך המשיח עתיד להחזיר מלכות בית דוד ובונה המקדש ומקבץ נדחי ישראל" (רמב"ם)

In the future, Hashem will build Yerushalayim and gather Bnei Yisroel from all corners of the world.

When Mashiach comes, he will return Malchus Bais David, build the Beis Hamikdash, and gather in all the scattered of Bnei Yisroel.

Q: Which will happen first: קיבוץ גלויות or the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash?

בזמן שעתיד הקב"ה לפקוד את עמו ישראל ויאמר לה קומי מעפר, היא תאמר להקב"ה: 'לאיזה מקום אלך? ביתי חרב, ההיכל נשרף באש' עד אשר יבנה לפני כן את בית המקדש ויתקן את ההיכל ויבנה את העיר ירושלים, ואחר כך יקים אותה מעפר ויקבץ את עמו..." (זוהר)

When Hashem will come to restore Bnei Yisroel saying 'Get up from the dust,' she will say: 'Where should I go? My House is destroyed, the heichal was incinerated!' So Hashem will first build the Beis Hamikdash, fix the heichal, and rebuild the city of Yerushalayim—only then will He pick Yisroel up from the dust and gather in His nation once more...

This order is evident in the words of the possuk—first we say 'בונה ירושלים' and then 'נדחי ישראל יכנס'.



We say 'בונה ירושלים' in present tense, as opposed to 'יבנה ירושלים' in future tense. Even now, when we are in Golus, Hashem is constantly building the בית המקדש של מצוות and מעלה – it's not just a myth that you learn in kindergarten! Each time we do מצוות, we add 'bricks' onto this מקדש! And when this building is complete, Hashem will bring it down to מטה של מטה and gather Bnei Yisroel together.

"הרופא לשבורי לב ומחבש לעצבותם"

"באותו הזמן של ימות המשיח לא תהיה לא קנאה ולא תחרות לא רעב ולא מלחמה" (רמב"ם)

Hashem will heal Bnei Yisroel who are broken-hearted from the difficulties of the Galus; and He will cure them of any pain that results from their feelings of sadness and despair.

When Mashiach comes, there will no longer be any jealousy or competition; there will not be hunger or war.

Q: What is the the difference between the two healing terms in this possuk—'הרופא' and 'ומחבש' ?

חבישה refers to acts of healing such as medical dispensation so that the affliction will heal. רפואה, on the other hand, refers to the act of binding up or casting a wounded limb so that the body will be able to re-set the wound and heal itself.

Hashem will perform both of these actions when Mashiach comes. רפואה - Hashem will 'heal' us by giving us whatever we were lacking before, both in ruchnyius and gashmiyus. And חבישה - He will strengthen the inherent, internal kochos that we have, the כוחות הנפש and כוחות הגוף that were weakened from all the tzaros that occurred during the time of Galus.

Those who are physically weak will be cured; those who are depressed or anxious will be restored.

“מונה מספר לכוכבים לכולם בשם יקרא”

”בימי מלך המשיח כשתתכונן ממלכתו יתקבצו אליו כל ישראל” (רמב”ם)

Hashem will gather all of Bnei Yisroel from wherever they are scattered—that are compared to the numerous scattered stars in the sky.

In the times of Mashiach, all of Klal Yisroel will be gathered.

STORY

When World War II ended, R' Eliezer Silver took it upon himself to rescue the Yiddishe children that had been hidden in monasteries throughout the war to enable them to survive. While they were sheltered physically from the Nazis, these young neshamos were subjected to constant religious indoctrination and eventually made to forget their Yiddishkeit. Upon entering the convents, R' Silver faced much hostility and opposition from the nuns in charge. Reluctant to allow their young charges to return to their Jewish roots, they vigorously denied the presence of Jewish children in their institution. Rabbi Silver firmly insisted on entering each monastery so that he would be able to see for himself. In one convent after another, Rabbi Silver stood before the assembled group of children and called out in ringing tones, 'שמע ישראל ה' אלקנו ה' אחד'. Like awakening from a dream, the Yiddishe children in each group came toward him, recognizing the words that had been imprinted upon their neshamos so long ago by their loving parents.

Similarly, לעתיד לבוא, Hashem will gather in all Yidden- not just those who are physically scattered, but also those who have become distanced and estranged from Yiddishkeit.



The possuk of 'לכולם בשם יקרא' refers to the astounding idea that Hashem calls each of the stars by name. Did you know that there are approximately 200 billion trillion stars in existence? That number is so high that we are not even able to envision it! Yet Hashem created each and every one of these stars, and, as such, is familiar with each single one.

The same is with His people. Though it seems that there are so many of us walking the face of this Earth, Hashem created each one of us and is intimately familiar with every aspect of our personalities, successes, failures, and character. He is guiding and caring for each one of His 'stars.'

”גדול אדוננו ורב כח
מעודד עניים ד' משפיל רשעים”

”לעתיד לבוא יאמרו 'ראו כל אלה יראי ה' איך ה' ברכם
וגדלם'“ (רמב”ם)

Hashem Himself, with His unlimited power, will strengthen the humble and lower the wicked.

When Mashiach comes, everyone will say: 'Look at all these G-d-fearing people, see how Hashem blessed them and made them great.'

Q: What is the meaning of the 'humbleness' and humility referenced here by 'עניים'?

Someone who is truly an עני recognizes that all his strengths, abilities, and talents come from Hashem. He does not seek honor; he acts solely שמים לשם.

These humble people and יראי שמים are not always viewed in a positive light; they usually do not receive honor or acclaim. One of the difficulties of galus is the fact that כבוד and respect are given to many בעלי גאווה and people who are not necessarily worthy. The wealthy are lauded; the prestigious positions are valued; the arrogant are accorded respect.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In these times of Galus and הסתר פנים, things are 'upside-down' and our perspectives are skewed. That is why people who are יראי שמים and humble are not accorded the respect they deserve—they may even appear to be losing out. When Mashiach comes, the truth will become clear—the righteous will be honored and rewarded and the wicked will be degraded.

“ענו לה’ בתודה זמרו לאלקנו” - The word ‘ענו’ connotes raising one’s voice in thanks and praise to Hashem.

In battle, soldiers rely on the strength of their horses and on their own fitness and abilities to outsmart and outrun their enemies. This is analogical to those who rely on their own talents and abilities to succeed in life.

Hashem seeks out those who rely on Him, rather than those who put their trust in their own 'horses' and capabilities.

STORY

He was astonished but still undeterred. Not wanting to lose out on a lucrative deal, the man went ahead and signed, relying on his business acumen and good feeling about the contract. The Rebbe's foresight and wisdom soon became apparent; upon clearing the trees from the forest, it became evident that the majority of his newly-acquired land was rotted.

The distraught businessman ran back to his Rebbe.

'Rebbe!' he cried. 'How did you know that the land wasn't good? Was it ruach hakodesh?' 'Not at all,' replied the Rebbe. 'It was your haughtiness and haste that tipped me off. I knew that relying only on your business sense and instincts instead of relying on Hashem would not possibly be able to result in success...'

The next few pesukim can be read, analyzed, and charted as a class. (If necessary, first translate the words to enable better understanding of the content.)

פסוק	חלשה	חסד
המכסה שמים עבים המכין לארץ מטר המצמיח הרים חציר	Humans aren't capable of 'watering' elevated locations such as mountains—at that height, Hashem takes care of providing water for the fields and creations.	Hashem sends rain to irrigate the fields and creatures
נותן לבהמה לחמה לבני עורב אשר יקראו	The Gemara states: 'לפי שהעורב אכזרי על בניו ה' מזמין להם יתושין ואוכלין' Hashem provides specifically for the raven who is cruel and abandons its young	Hashem provides sustenance for all animals
שבחי ירושלים את ה'... כי חזק בריחי שערין בוך בנין בקרבן	It is beyond the capability of humans to ensure their own security.	Hashem ensures the constant security of Yerushalayim and blesses its inhabitants.
השם גבולך שלום חלב חטים ישיבין	The Gemara states: 'אין מריבה מצויה: "אלא על עסקי תבואה" When a person is lacking sustenance, he is in a constant state of anxiety and worry. This is why Hashem provides grain, so that we can remain calm and secure	Hashem provides a bounty of 'fattened wheats'-enriched grains so that we will not have to be busy importing grain from distant places.
השולח אמרתו ארץ עד מהרה ירוץ דברו	Our livelihood and sustenance are dependent on the rain, which is not within our power to control.	Hashem 'commands' the rain to fall without delay.
הנותן שלג כצמר כפור כאפר יפזר	Hashem takes pity on the destitute who have no protection from the cold and eases their suffering according to their ability to withstand it.	Hashem sends the 'snow'—the cold—according to the 'wool'—our ability to stay warm.
משליך קרחו כפיתים... ישלח דברו ימסס ישב רוחו יזלו מים	Hashem regulates the temperature of the world; If it gets too cold, He immediately sends warmth to dispel it. This kind of global temperature regulation is beyond the scope of human ability.	Hashem sends the 'ice'—the cold—like 'crumbs, and immediately afterward blows a wind to melt and disperse the cold

THE BOTTOM LINE

All these kindnesses are bestowed upon us by Hakadosh Baruch Hu because we are part of the עם הנבחר - like the possuk says: 'מגיד דבריו ליעקב חקיו ומשפטיו לישראל' — as opposed to the goyim who are not the specific beneficiaries of Hashem's bounty— 'לא עשה כן לכל גוי'. This relates to the progression of pesukim in the Torah, 'אם בחקותי תלכו...ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם' - when we follow the Torah and cling to the word of Hashem, we merit His bounty and protection.

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Post a variety of pictures on the board and have students jot down the pesukim that pertain to each one. After a set amount of time, review the exercises together.

- Beis Hamikdash
- Doctor's Tools
- Wheat Stalks
- Rain and Clouds
- Walls of Yerushalyim
- Raven
- Sunshine
- Winter Clothing

ACTIVITY

Students fill in a notecard to keep.

I am waiting for Mashiach because:

Even in Galus, I see Hashem's kindness through:

What did I do today to contribute to the building of the בית המקדש של מעלה?

ACTIVITY

Hand out a sheet with each of the pesukim translated. Read through each of the pesukim aloud, and have students highlight each passuk in one color if it's related to the times of galus, and in a different color if it's related to the times of geulah.

הללוך-ה: קמ"ח

IN THIS TEFILLAH

We describe how all the different levels of creation praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Not just us, as humans, but even inanimate objects and natural elements praise Hashem.

ANTICIPATORY SET

Distribute cards to students with 'Wonders of Creation' facts. Students take turns reading their cards aloud.

Plants

Royal Imperial-primula Imperialus

This unusual flower is found only on Mount Pangrango, a volcanic mountain in West Java, Indonesia. Its flowers foretell of an eruption, as it only blossoms just before the volcano erupts. Children living in the area nicknamed it 'The Judgement Day Blossom.'

Insects

Leaf Beetle

This fascinating insect is shaped and colored to look exactly like a leaf. This camouflage is a gift from Hashem, as it allows the beetle to remain protected from its predators. Interestingly, the leaf beetle even appears to blow innocently in the breeze!

Birds

Wagtail Bird (נחילאלי)

Every autumn, the wagtail bird is seen near the Mediterranean Sea. When winter begins, this species of bird suddenly disappears, not to be seen again until the following autumn. Scientists studied the wagtail and its migration patterns and realized that each bird returns to the same exact area year after year...what an unbelievable navigation system!

The Solar System

Sun and Moon

The sun and moon orbit in a precise path and in a perfectly coordinated speed, allowing them each to reach the same exact points at the same exact milliseconds every year anew.

Trees and Plants

California Cedar

The cedar trees of California stand at over 300 feet tall! Some of the trees are nearly 3,000 years old and yet, are still growing.

Rocks and Inanimates

La Piedra Movediza (i.e., 'The Wobbly Rock')

This huge boulder was a balancing rock located in Tandil, Argentina weighing nearly 300 tons. That's 600,000 pounds! It perched precariously at the edge of a tall hill and rocked back and forth, almost imperceptibly, from morning till night. Scientists experimented by hitching up 1,000 horses to try and move the rock—the boulder did not budge. The gentlest breeze caused it to sway, while the strongest force had no effect!

Human Anatomy

The Brain

The human brain accounts for less than 2% of the body's weight and size. Unbelievably, though, this small organ contains trillions of microscopic neurons and synapses which control the body and mind!

After hearing all these facts, ask the students for their reactions/thoughts to the miracles and wonders of the בריאה.

THE BOTTOM LINE

'בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו ובראיו הנפלאים ויראה מהם חכמתו שאין לה ערך וקץ מיד הוא משבח ומפאר' (רמב"ם)

'When a person takes the time to analyze and ponder the miraculous wonders of Hashem's creations, when he sees the infinite wisdom inherent in each one, it will immediately bring him to praise and glorify the Creator.'

As Yidden, we know that nature, טבע, is biggest miracle of all! All the scientific advances and new modern inventions (electricity, technology, etc.) are all based off of nature itself. All these wondrous creations bring us to recognize and praise the Creator of it all— Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

THE CONTENT

Each and every creation has a specific תפקיד to accomplish—and they do this by constantly singing שירה to Hashem. This enables them to keep existing. This perek of Tehillim is a joyous expression of this praise—Dovid Hamelech is calling upon each creation to sing its song, creating a symphony of heavenly and earthly praise to Hashem.



The עזרא אבן says: 'זה המזמור נכבד מאד' - this mizmor is a very 'honored' one—and for that reason, if someone needs to skip part of Pesukei D'zimrah, they should still be careful to say פרק קמ"ח קמ"ח.

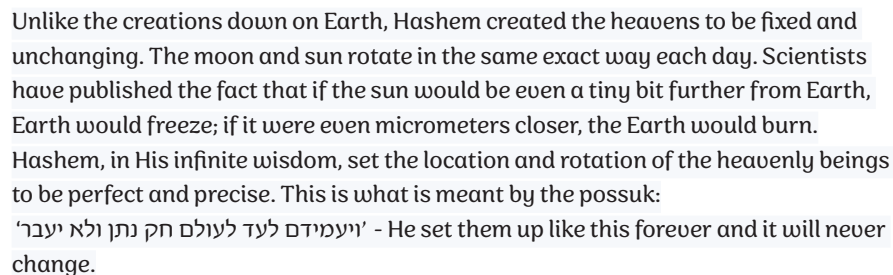
The perek can be divided into two parts: the songs of the heavenly creations and the songs of the earthly creations.

ברואי שמים

THE HEAVENLY SPHERES

Students can look in their siddurim to try and list the various phrases that mention the praises of the heavenly creations. Then explain each phrase:

- "הללוהו במרומים" - the highest heavenly spheres, not the sky that we can see outside
- "הללוהו כל מלאכיו" - the מלאכים who serve Hashem directly
- "הללוהו כל צבאיו" - Hashem's 'army,' referring to the lesser מלאכים who serve Hashem with different responsibilities in this world.
- "שמש וירח... כל כוכבי אור" - the stars exist in a suspended state, between the complete רוחניות of the מלאכים and the גשמיות of the earth, so they have the unique ability to praise Hashem in the same manner as מלאכים. (Rambam)
- "הללוהו שמי השמים" - this double לשון refers to the sky we see above and the רקיע above that.
- "והמים אשר מעל השמים" - referring to the water contained within the clouds



EARTHLY CREATIONS

- “תנינים וכל תהומות” - the large fish in the depths of the sea
- “אש וברד שלג וקיסור” - snow and hail fall from the sky; dew and fire rise from the ground
- “רוח סערה עושה דברו” - strong winds only blow on Hashem's command
- “עץ פרי וכל ארזים” - every tree that grows from the ground, fruit-bearing or not (like cedar)
- “החיה וכל בהמה רמש וציפור כנף” - every type of creature, both wild and domestic, reptiles, insects, and birds
- “מלכי ארץ וכל לאמים שרים וכל שופטי ארץ” - important people like kings, advisors, and judges
- “בחורים וגם בתולות זקנים עם נערים” – people of every age and stage praise Hashem, each according to their level

“לבני ישראל עם קרובו הללו ק-ה” - The people of Klal Yisroel are the ones who praise Hashem the most. Every creation sings His praises, but His people are the ones that have the closest and most discerning relationship. As עובדי ה', we alone recognize Hakadosh Baruch Hu and serve Him in a befitting manner.

REVIEW

ACTIVITY

Prepare 'Domino' cards: One side of each card should contain a passuk from this perek and the other should have a phrase from Perek Shira. (Point out to the students that Perek Shira is a tefilla that explores the individual and unique praises of each individual creation sings to Hashem.) Place the Domino cards on the board and have the students take turns coming up to match the cards 'Domino-style.'

צבי אומר: 'ואני אשיר עזיך'	הללוהו שמש וירח	ירח אומר: 'עשה ירח למועדים'	הללו את ד' מן השמים	שמים אומרים: 'השמים מספרים...'	Start
ימים אומרים: 'מקולות מים רבים'	הללו את ד'...עץ פרי וכל ארזים	אילנות שבשדה אומרים:....	הללו את ד'... וציפור כנף	ציפור אומר: 'גם ציפור מצאה בית'	יהללו את ד'... וכל בהמה
End	הללו את ד'... החיה וכל בהמה...רמש	סוס אומר: 'הנה כעני עבדים אל יד אדוניהם...'	הללו את ד' מן הארץ...רוח סערה עושה דברו	רוח אומר: 'אומר לצפון תני ולתימן אל תכלאי'	הללו את ד' מן הארץ...וכל תהומות

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Students work individually to categorize pesukim from the perek:

דומם	צומח	חי	מדבר

הללוך-ה: קמ"ט

IN THIS TEFILLAH

We enumerate more of the wondrous happenings that will occur during the times of Geulah. Although this was partially described in פרק קמ"ט, this perek goes on to discuss even more of the good that we will enjoy, and the praises we ascribe to Hashem for this.

ANTICIPATORY SET

What does the word 'adapt' mean? It means to become adjusted or used to new conditions. Generally, adapting to new circumstances is a positive thing. Can you think of some circumstances that are not worth adapting to? *Have students give examples, then chart them on the board. (Bad habits, negative situations, etc.)*

Read aloud a newspaper excerpt that was printed approximately 30 years ago in the Hamodia:

Is it Worth Adapting?

'...If you take a stroll on Main Street in Rishon L'Tzion at 5:30 in the morning, you will see a strange sight at the neighborhood grocery store. A long, winding line of people are queued up, waiting at the makolet's entrance for the doors to open. What's going on? With a short explanation, you will realize that the scene is not so strange, after all. You see, these are new 'olim' who emigrated from Russia after living under the oppressive hand of the Communist rule for many years. In Russia, groceries and basic staples were only able to be purchased by presenting valid 'food tickets.' And even with the necessary tickets, supplies were scarce. If someone was standing toward the end of the line, there would be nothing left for them to buy. The stock would run out, and many times they returned home empty-

handed, lacking the basic necessities their family needed.

Many people began waking up at the crack of dawn to ensure that they would be among the fortunate ones to procure the coveted groceries.

This explains why, even now, when they had escaped from under the Communist thumb and were living peacefully in Eretz Yisroel, many new Russian olim could not let go of this 'early-bird' mentality and were still anxiously waiting outside the makolet door from 5:30 in the morning. They were not able to let go of their fear that the food would run out, and so continued to wake up each morning, day after day, to be the first ones in line at the grocery...'

CONCLUSION

The immigrants mentioned in the excerpt had become used to a life of hardship, fear, and deprivation. Even once their fears were no longer relevant or founded, they did not adapt to their new circumstances and continued to live with that constant anxiety.

Usually, human nature allows for quick and easy adaptation. In fact, a person will be much quicker to adapt to good and easy circumstances when coming from a place of fear and anxiety. We prefer to be comfortable.

The following two stories will demonstrate the difference between those with the ability to adapt and those who prefer to stay with the status quo:

STORY

Dovid, an eight-year-old boy, wakes up one morning with an angry-looking red rash. A visit to the doctor and subsequently, an allergist, reveals the source of the rash: He has developed a sensitivity to dairy. From now on, he has to eliminate all milk products from his daily diet. It is very difficult for Dovid to acclimate to his new reality. No more hot cocoa, no more flavored yogurts, and no more of his favorite cheesecake. He manages, though, and life goes on.

Now Dovid is a teenager. His parents take him back to his allergist for a check-up.

Miraculously, testing reveals that Dovid's dairy allergy has disappeared!

Is it difficult for Dovid to adapt to his new circumstances? To re-introduce dairy products into his diet?

Of course not! Within a day or two, he is right back to enjoying his favorite cheesecake. He drinks hot cocoa by the gallon, and the flavored yogurts regain their previous spot of glory on the top shelf of the fridge.

Soon enough, Dovid forgets that these items had ever disappeared from his life in the first place.

STORY

Yanky was born during World War II. His parents, trying to escape from the claws of the Nazis, ש"י, went underground and hid in a dank, dark bunker. They survived on the scarcest minimum by eating potato peels and the like. From the time he was an infant, the sum total of Yanky's diet consisted of potato peels.

When the war was over and they all finally emerged from the bunker, Yanky's parents explained to him that he would now be able to enjoy things he had never experienced before: the sunshine on his face, breathing in the fresh air, and a full variety of foods including protein, carbs, and vegetables. From now on, he wouldn't have to suffice with an animal's diet of measly potato skins... Yanky, who had thus far never tasted anything else, became very agitated and started to wail: 'But I like eating potato peels! I don't want to eat anything else...!'

THE BOTTOM LINE

The difference between these two boys is obvious: **One was able to adapt easily, while the other was not able to let go of the difficulties he experienced. Why?**

Dovid, who had already tasted the sweet taste of dairy products, had no issue re-introducing these foods into his diet. He knew exactly what he had been missing out on during those years that he was allergic to dairy, and thus had no problem going right back to eating those very foods, even years later.

Yanky, however, had no previous experience with real food. All he had ever known was a diet of potato peels. Having been born into his difficult circumstances, **he didn't even know what he was missing!** From his perspective, this was a normal life. He was fine with the status quo and wanted things to stay how they had always been.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, we are like Yanky. We were born into our current state of living in Galus—this is the only life we've ever known. We've never even experienced the joy and clarity of living during times of Geulah! Nevertheless, we have to be aware of the fact that the lives we are living are lives of 'potato peels'—we are lacking so much.

We have become accustomed to living with hardship: financial struggles, illness, other issues, etc. We need to constantly remind ourselves that this is not the way life is supposed to be. We need to realize that when Mashiach comes, our lives will be infinitely better and our realities will be incomparably improved. Let's not content ourselves with subsisting on potato peels!

What can help us daven and hope more intensely for the Geulah?

Expanding our knowledge about the ימי משיח will help us improve both our tefillos for the Geulah and our desire to see the coming of Mashiach, במהרה בימינו.

THE CONTENT

There is a medrash that describes the ימות המשיח:

'In the future, Klal Yisrael will rule the entire world. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will destroy and take revenge on all the enemies of Yisrael... at that time Hashem will take His crown and place it upon the head of Mashiach ben David...and he will settle Bnei Yisroel in peace and tranquility...'

עתידין ישראל למלוך על כל העולם
כולו משפה לשפה, עתיד הקדוש
ברוך הוא לאבד את כל אויבי עמו
ולעשות בהם נקמה... באותה שעה
נוטל הקדוש ברוך כתר ומניחו
בראש משיח בן דוד... ומושיב ישראל
(בהשקט ובבטחה ילקוט שמעוני)

In our current state of galus, the nations of the world are the ones in a position of power and we, Klal Yisroel, reside in acquiescent submission, governed by the predicated dictum of 'עשו שונא ליעקב'.

In this perek, we praise Hashem for the all the good that will befall us with the coming of Mashiach and the subsequent התגלות כבוד שמים. The world will turn on its head, and we will be the ones ruling over the subservient goyim.

What is the 'new-ness' of the song referred to here? - 'הללוק-ה שירו לה' שיר חדש'

The medrash states: 'אמר הקב"ה: כשם שאני עושה חדשות האלו כך אמרו לי שיר חדש' (מדרש שוחר טוב)

When Mashiach comes, Hashem will perform countless 'חדשות' - new miracles and never-before-seen nissim. Therefore, all the praises and שירים that we have related in this world prior to the coming of משיח will not be sufficient! Witnessing and experiencing the coming of Mashiach, Klal Yisrael will burst forth with a new song—a שיר חדש.

GENERAL CATEGORIZATION OF THE PESUKIM

Students can fill out a chart to divide the pesukim in the perek into two categories:

בתקופת אחרית הימים

מלכות העמים	מלכות ה'
לעשות נקמה בגוים תוכחות בלאמים	ישמח ישראל בעושי בני ציון יגילו במלכם
לאסור מלכיהם בזיקים ונכבדיהם בחבלי ברזל	יהללו שמו במחול
לעשות בהם משפט כתוב	כי רוצה ה' בעמו יפאר עניים בישועה
	ורוממות ק-ל בגרונם וחרב פיפיות....

מלכות ה'

These pesukim follow a general format:

1. The first half of the possuk has the **how** we praise Hashem
2. The second half gives either the **outcome** of or the **reason** for that praise.

חלק הראשון - העבח	חלק השני - התוצאה / סיבה
<p>ב ישמח ישראל בעושי</p> <p>ה' - Bnei Yisroel will rejoice in their Maker - ה'</p>	<p>בני ציון יגילו במלכם'</p> <p>When Klal Yisrael exult in being Hashem's chosen nation, the outcome is that they will rejoice in Hashem's malchus when it is finally revealed</p>
<p>ג-ד יהללו שמו במחול בתוף וכינור יזמרו לו</p> <p>Bnei Yisroel will praise Hashem with dance and song (musical instruments)</p>	<p>רצה ה' בעמו יפאר עניים בישועה</p> <p>The cause of Bnei Yisrael praising Hashem here is His never-ending desire for and interest in their wellbeing. The very fact that Hashem will redeem them and bring them the salvation of the final geulah is proof of this</p>
<p>ה-ו יעלזו חסידים בכבוד</p> <p>Bnei Yisroel will rejoice over the eternal glory they will enjoy when Mashiach comes</p>	<p>חרב פיפיות בידם</p> <p>The praise that Klal Yisroel give Hashem here is so great that it leads to an outcome of בידם פיפיות—as if a double-edged sword is in their hands—that signifies great strength and invincibility. In the zchus of these praises, they will be victorious in מלחמת גוג ומגוג.</p>
<p>ה-ו ירננו על משכבותם</p> <p>They will rejoice at night</p>	
<p>ה-ו רוממות ק-ל בגרונם</p> <p>Exaltations of Hashem will be constantly 'in their throats'—they will constantly be praising Hashem</p>	

מלכות הגויים

These pesukim describe what will happen to the goyim when Mashiach comes. When Bnei Yisroel will be victorious over our enemies, we will be able to finally pay them back for all the ways they oppressed us when we were in galus.

לעשות נקמה בגויים תוכחות בלאמים	ז
<i>We will take revenge on the goyim and pain them</i>	
לאסור מלכיהם בזיקים נכדיהם בכבלי ברזל	ח
<i>We will tie up their leaders with chains of iron in order to bring them to justice</i>	
לעשות בהם משפט כתוב	ט
<i>We will judge them for what they have done</i>	

Just imagine what it will be like in reality: World leaders, who we have seen wielding such power, creating such chaos, and invoking endless terror, will now be handcuffed like common criminals and prisoners, their evil bared and on trial by a Jewish Court. The very people whom they sought to oppress will be the ones now serving them their due.



The Gemara writes that when Mashiach comes and the goyim witness the miracles happening to Bnei Yisroel, they will panic and seek to convert. But it will be too late. אין מקבלין גרים לימות המשיח. They will become enslaved to us, instead.

THE BOTTOM LINE

All of these events will serve to only strengthen and fortify our belief in Hashem's malchus, as stated in the concluding pesukim of the perek: 'הדר הוא לכל חסידיו' - these nissim will be a source of glory for Bnei Yisroel... הללו ק-ה!

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Bring in two different-colored balls. One color signifies the pesukim that relate to מלכות ה' and the other signifies the pesukim that relate to מלכיות העמים.

Throw one colored ball to one student and one colored ball to another. Have each student find and recite a possuk from this perek that relates to the proper category of the ball she received. Upon correctly reciting the pesukim, students throw the balls to other students and the process continues. Repeat until all the pesukim have been properly categorized and recited.

הללוך-ה: ק"נ

IN THIS TEFILLAH

We use examples of different musical instruments and their respective characteristics to portray various aspects of our praise to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This perek reflects the powerful musical expression of praise to Hashem that was experienced in the Beis Hamkidash.

ANTICIPATORY SET

Select five students to stand at the front of the room. Place a picture of a musical instrument on each student's back; students stand with their backs to the class and do not have any prior knowledge as to which instrument they were given.

Instruments:

- כנור - *violin*
- נבל - *harp*
- שופר - *horn*
- מצלתיים - *cymbals*
- תוף - *drum*

Read aloud different statements and have the students attribute each one to the girl that is wearing the fitting instrument. (Similar to the well-known 'Fe,Fi,Fo,Fum' game.) Eventually, have the five students attempt to guess which instrument is on their back.

Statements:

- This instrument is known to have a particularly delicate and soft sound.
(*Violin*)
- This instrument has a unique shape and form.
(*Harp*)
- This instrument is familiar to us since childhood, as it relates to a certain Yom Tov.
(*Horn*)
- This instrument produces a loud, blaring sound.
(*Horn*)

- This instrument was used by someone in Tanach (Dovid) to sing to Hashem.
(Harp)
- This instrument has a round, flat shape.
(Cymbals)
- This instrument was used by the women to praise Hashem after Krias Yam Suf.
(Drums)
- This instrument produces sound by being pounded upon with sticks.
(Drums)
- This instrument has many strings of varying heights.
(Harp)
- This instrument is played using hand motions similar to big claps.
(Cymbals)

BOTTOM LINE

This perek contains expressions of praise to Hashem through various musical instruments and mediums.



רבינו בחיי: 'ויהיה אותו הקול...סיבה להביא על האדם שינה או שחוק ושמחה גדולה...או צער ואבל כבד מאד הכל לפי תנועות הקולות...וחכמה זו נקראת חכמת הניגון

"The sound of music can bring a person to slumber or to laughter and great joy...or to pain and deep mourning, according to the tone and the beat and rhythm...such is the power of music."

Music is unbelievably powerful. Because music has such a deep connection to a person's nefesh, it can awaken us and influence us. It can make us joyful or make us contemplative. Music can arouse a person to teshuva. This is why the 'Chamber of Music' (היכל הנגינה) in שמים is right near the 'Chamber of Teshuva' (היכל התשובה) — the two are definitively linked to each other. In many instances, a song that a person hears can make an indelible impression on them and remain with them for many, many years.

STORY

Many years ago, during the regime of the Czar Nikolai, the infamous 'Cantonist Decree' was enacted in Russia. Hundreds of young Jewish children were snatched from their homes and forced to join the Russian Army. They were forcibly conscripted for twenty years!

Inevitably, most of these children quickly forgot their Jewish roots and heritage, surrounded as they were by Russian soldiers and warfare. They were so young that all memories of their families and homes were eventually eradicated.

One of these korbanos started his army career at the tender age of 9. As the years went by, he quickly rose through the army's ranks, excelling as a soldier and a patriot, until he reached the level of Lieutenant in the Russian Navy. As part of his job, he was accustomed to sailing on many long journeys at sea.

On one occasion, his boat docked at a port in Odessa toward nightfall. Exhausted from the long and arduous journey, the lieutenant disembarked and began to stroll leisurely along the shore. As he was walking, a faint, distant tune reached his ears. The tune was nigglingly familiar. He closed his eyes in concentration, trying in vain to recall where he had heard it before.

He walked faster and faster, trying to get closer to the sound of the singing. The more he walked, the clearer the tune became. After some time, the lieutenant found himself standing at the entrance to a shul. The sun had already set, and a powerful wave of unified voices was emanating from within.

The memories came flooding back with startling clarity—Kol Nidrei!

He entered the shul and saw that he had not been mistaken—everyone was dressed in white, standing and davening with heartfelt emotion. Suddenly, he was a little child all over again, walking to shul Yom Kippur night, hand in hand with his father.

A bitter cry erupted from the depths of his soul as the full realization of what had been stolen from him hit home. His past. His People. His rich heritage.

Upon returning to his ship, the Lieutenant knew he would not be returning to the Russian Navy. He would be returning to his people. Reclaiming what was rightfully his.

THE BOTTOM LINE

This story shows the incredible influence that music can have on a person. A tune or a song heard during childhood can have an indelible impression and remain with someone for years to come.

The Beis Hamikdash was a place where the כח הנגינה was specifically present and utilized. שבת לוי was the שבת that was chosen to stand and sing in the Beis Hamikdash every day.

Picture a man who comes to the Beis Hamikdash to bring a קרבן חטאת —the korban that was brought to get כפרה for an aveirah that had been committed. It is imperative that the one who is bringing the korban feel regret and have thoughts of teshuva— the mere action of bringing a korban is not enough. As the נביא says: 'בפיו ובשפתיו כבודוני ולבם רחק ממני' - With his mouth and lips he honored Me, but his heart is distant from Me.

What helps this person reach within and bring himself to these feelings of remorse and teshuva?

As he enters the gates of the עזרה, he hears the לויים singing שירה. This שירה awakens his soul and inspires feelings of חרטה within him. As he stands there and listens to the soul-stirring melodies, these feelings get stronger and stronger until he finally is able to go and bring his korban with a broken heart and the proper emotion.

Picture someone who comes to the Beis Hamikdash to bring a קרבן תודה – the korban of thanks. His heart is already full of הכרת הטוב to Hashem for the kindnesses He bestowed upon him. When he stands and listens to the שירה of the לויים, however, these feelings of thanks and joy strengthen even more, rising up and overflowing in his heart. In this emotionally-laden state, he goes to bring his קרבן with pure kavanos and a song on his lips.

'An effective way for a Yid to come close to Hashem is through music and songs of kedusha... because music has a great power to draw a person closer to Hashem...'

עיקר התקרבות...האיש הישראלי
להשי"ת הוא ע"י קול וניגון דקדושה...
כי הנגינה יש לה כח
גדול להמשיך את האדם להשי"ת
(ספר תשובת השנה)

CONCLUSION

This perek, which is also the last perek in Tehillim, describes the praises to Hashem that were sung in the Beis Hamikdash through the medium of song. And even though, to our sorrow, the Beis Hamikdash is no longer standing, we recite this perek each day in order to express our deep yearning and anticipation for the quick return of the Beis Hamikdash and the coming of the geulah, במהרה בימנו אמן.

THE CONTENT

The word 'הללו' is found in this perek a total of thirteen times. This is representative of the י"ג מדות of הרחמים.

The first possuk describes the manner in which we praise Hashem: 'הללו ק-ל בקדשו' – Praise Hashem in the place of His kedusha. This is referring to the Beis Hamikdash. Why should we specifically praise Hashem there? 'ברקיע עזו' - because this is the place where His shechina rests. ('His strength in the Heavens' - ברקיע עזו - refers to Hashem's shechina.)

MASHAL

A story is told of a powerful and mighty king who wanted to promote one of his officers to a position of great prestige and honor. The king gathered all of his servants and officers and requested that they each prepare an essay describing his greatness. The officer who would be able to most accurately describe the king's greatness would be chosen for the promotion.

Why was this the test that he chose?

The manner of praise and the way that an officer chooses to describe the greatness of the king bears testimony to his loyalty and authenticity. Before gaining an honorable promotion, this would be an accurate test of trust and value.

NIMSHAL

When we come to praise Hashem, it has to be in a manner that is accurate and befitting for His strength and awesomeness.

- 'הללוהו בגבורותיו הללוהו כרב גדלו' - We praise Hashem for the indescribable kindnesses He's done with our nation, more than any other nation in the world, כרב גדלו — we praise Him according to the greatness that is befitting Him.
- The perek then goes on to enumerate the various different musical instruments through which we praise Hashem. Each one has a different voice; some are powerful and piercing, while others are soft and delicate. We will use all of them to sing שירה to Hashem when the Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt, במהרה בימנו.
- After listing all the musical instruments, the perek goes on to describe an even more elevated form of praise to Hashem. More than all the music in the world, the purest form of praise is that which comes from deep within ourselves, rising up from within our hearts and neshamos.

The neshama is our most spiritual component, a חלק אלוך ממעל that was placed within us. We say 'כל הנשמה תהלל ק-ה' - every neshama will praise Hashem. We say this possuk twice, to symbolize two types of praises: that which our neshama will be עוה"ז in משבח and that which our neshama will be עוה"ב in משבח. Our neshamos exist forever; the praise that our neshamos attribute to Hashem exists forever, as well.

The מדרש רבה expounds on these words and writes:

'על כל נשימה ונשימה שאדם נושם עליו לקלס לבוראו' - For each and every breath that a person breathes, it is incumbent upon him to praise his Creator. Science has shown that the average person takes about 20,000 breaths in one day...that's 7.5 million per year! If Chazal tell us to praise Hashem with every breath, our thanks and gratitude must be truly endless, infinite, and without borders.

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Students fill out a list enumerating the things they are grateful for (for extra challenge, have them fill out a list according to the letters of the aleph-bais/ABC's).

ויברד דוד

IN THIS TEFILLAH

We journey through various chapters of Klal Yisroel's history and see how they always managed to rise above any and all circumstances to praise Hashem's name.

ANTICIPATORY SET

Divide the students into groups of three or four. Distribute two papers to each group.

Paper #1: Pictures of random items—a shopping cart, ice cream cone, armchair, book, microphone, etc.

Paper #2: Names of emotions—Angry, happy, disappointed, sad, excited, nervous, hurt, grateful, etc.

Have each student choose a picture from the first paper and think of a story that happened to her relating to that item, then choose an emotion from the second paper that accurately describes her feelings at the time of the story.

Choose a few students to share their stories. This will highlight the pattern that the stories about positive, happy incidents generally evoked positive emotions and feelings, while the stories about negative or difficult incidents evoked negative emotions and feelings.

Is it possible to change the emotions you had previously associated with a certain incident?

Example: I chose the picture of the microphone. This reminded me of the time that I wanted to get the opening solo in the school play, and I didn't get it. I was so disappointed and upset.

How can I now change the feelings of disappointment I had previously associated with this incident to feelings that are more positive?

Example: I can think that retroactively it was a good thing I didn't get the solo because I was nervous enough as it was to be on stage; I can think that it was an opportunity for me to practice being happy for others; I can think that it was a chance for me to be dan l'kaf z'chus the choir heads for not choosing me, etc.

CONCLUSION

In the tefilla of ויברך דוד, we will learn various sources from Chazal depicting how Klal Yisroel overcame difficulties throughout the generations and managed to praise Hashem despite trying times. In any situation, a Yid can find it within himself to thank and praise Hashem. Even if the situation looks bleak and difficult, we can rise above the circumstances in order to see the good and grow.

INTRODUCTION

We say this tefilla after the הללוקה 's, before אז ישיר. After we enumerate so many praises of Hashem during the הללוקה 's, this tefilla comes to arouse our emotions to be able to attribute all our successes to Hashem and to praise Him for them. Even if a person is in a situation that seems to be not fruitful or lucrative, he can still perform mitzvos and do רצון ה'.

This tefilla is made up of praises that Bnei Yisroel gave to Hashem during two different times and were subsequently written down in ספר נחמיה and ספר דברי הימים. Both times were occasions relating to building the Beis Hamikdash, and though Bnei Yisroel were in different situations and states of mind on each occasion, the level of their praise remained the same.

PART ONE

- 'ויברכו שם כבודך' until 'ויברך דוד'

Dovid Hamelech said this before he was נכטר, when he gathered Bnei Yisroel and they donated gold and silver toward the building of the Beis Hamikdash.

Even though Dovid himself did not build the Beis Hamikdash, at this gathering he entrusted his son, Shlomo, with the responsibility and the privilege of seeing it to completion and using the tremendous amount of donated supplies for the right purposes. Together with Bnei Yisroel, Dovid thanked Hashem for prosperity of his nation that allowed all these resources to be collected, and attributed their hatzlacha to Hashem.

PART TWO

From 'וישע ה' until 'ויברכו שם כבודך' -

These pesukim were said prior to Bnei Yisroel building the second Beis Hamikdash. Bnei Yisroel had returned from גלות בבל, intending to rebuild בית שני. At this point, however, Bnei Yisroel were under the rule of כורש and had to pay taxes to him. This meant that they did not have the same abundance of resources as the previous generations did when the collection for the first Beis Hamikdash took place (during the time of Dovid Hamelech). The expected morale and collective mood during a period of lack and poverty would be one of depression, sadness, and deprivation. However, the portrayal of events as transcribed in ספר נחמיה describes the exact opposite:

Bnei Yisroel stood up and praised Hashem—even with the deprivation they were feeling at that point, they attributed everything that they had to Him. Even though in their state of lack and neediness, the natural reaction would be to shy away from their avodas Hashem merely out of necessity (they didn't have the necessary resources to donate to and build the next Beis Hamikdash), nevertheless they stayed firm in their dueykus and took it upon themselves to achieve their goal. Every person gave the little that they had toward the re-building of the House of Hashem.

THE BOTTOM LINE

From the juxtaposition of the pesukim said by Bnei Yisroel in two such drastically different situations, this tefilla emphasizes an important idea: No matter what situation we find ourselves in, we have to learn to attribute everything to Hakadosh Baruch Hu—in good times and in harder times. Even if we are in a difficult situation and we feel deprivation and lack, there is always something that we can thank Hashem for. As long as we are living, we are still able to serve Hashem and do His will.



Dovid Hamelech knew, with ruach hakodesh, that he would not be the one to build the Beis Hamikdash. His primary tafkid was to spearhead the wars against the פלישתים, and someone who had killed others could not be the one to build the Bais Hashem. Nevertheless, Dovid put a lot of effort into paving the way for his son, Shlomo, to build it. Dovid purchased the land upon which it would be built, gathered spoils and resources with which to build, and even dug out the foundations! The possuk he wrote in Tehillim says, 'אם אתן שנת לעיני...עד אמצא מקום לד' - 'I will not allow my eyes to slumber...until I find a place for Hashem.'

This provides the background for the first section of the tefilla, which was said by Dovid Hamelech when he gathered Klal Yisroel before his פטירה, laid out the plans for the construction of the Beis Hamikdash, and exhorted them to donate all their vast resources toward building the בית ה'. As previously mentioned, this took place during a time when בני"י were prosperous, wealthy, and successful. They said these pesukim to praise and thank Hashem for their הצלחה and prosperity.

When it was time to build the second Beis Hamikdash, however, בני"י were under the rule of כורש and were obligated to pay heavy taxes and fees. They were poor in money and lacked the necessary resources to donate generously. Unbelievably, they still raised their voices in praise and thanks to Hashem, overcoming their bleak circumstances to recognize the blessings and good that they were granted and to attribute everything to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This dichotomy teaches us a beautiful lesson that is important to carry with us through our years in galus. Things will not always be easy. Life will not always be smooth-sailing. It is in our ability, though, to rise above the difficulties and find it within ourselves to thank and praise Hashem for all He does.

In times of success, we must also attribute everything to Hashem.

The passuk says, 'וזכרת את ד' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל'. Even at times when we are successful and prosperous, we must remember to attribute our successes to Hashem. How foolish is the man who takes credit for his own victories and attributes them to his own brains, skills, or talents.

MASHAL

A bird gets trapped inside someone's house. Unaccustomed to the sudden restrictive environment and craving a return to fresh air, the bird flies around the room, seeking a way out. She sees a glass window and attempts to fly right out. Obviously, the glass, though transparent, does not allow her to exit and she bangs right into the window. Undeterred, the bird tries again, flying directly at the window panes and once again smashing right into the glass. Hearing the strange noises, the owner of the house runs into the room and quickly sizes up the situation. He realizes the bird is trying to fly out the window, and with one tug opens the window to allow the bird to exit. The bird is ready for another attempt. She flies, again, directly at the window—this time to be met with success! Her escape works and she is soon flying again and reveling in her re-gained freedom. The bird truly believes that it was her own determination and efforts that finally enabled her to escape. To her, there was no difference between her second and third attempts at flying out the window. How foolish! Any human onlooker would realize that had the owner not appeared to open the window, the bird would still be flying into the glass panes, banging her head again and again in futility. The human homeowner who opened the window was the real cause of the bird's successful exit.

NIMSHAL

Unfortunately, there are many times that we fall into the same pattern of mistaken thinking as that witless bird. We truly believe that it is our own efforts, skills, brains, or determination that determines our successes. It is our intellect that enabled us to solve the problem; it is our personality that enabled us to become popular; it is our skill that enabled us to earn so much money, etc. It is incumbent on us to realize that Hashem is the only One who is 'opening the glass window' and that He alone is behind every success that we encounter.

What thoughts run through your mind when you receive a 'juicy' compliment or positive feedback on an event that you coordinated? On a grade that you earned? On an outfit you purchased?

Let's learn to move our thoughts away from the 'כוחי ועוצם ידי' side of the spectrum to the 'וזכרת את ה' אלקיך' side of things. Not only in times of success, but also when things seem to be difficult. We can channel our feelings of disappointment, failure, and blame to those of bitachon and trust in Hashem. We can rise above our circumstances to seek out the good and to grow from each experience.

THE CONTENT PART ONE

"ויברך דוד את ה'" - In this paragraph, Dovid Hamelech attributes his hatzlacha to Hashem and praises Him.

In all the tefillos of Pesukei D'zimrah that we already recited, we praised Hashem for His hanhagos, His kindnesses that He does with us, the world that He created, etc. In this tefilla of ויברך דוד we now announce: Everything comes from Hashem!



The words 'ודאי' - certain! It is certain that Hashem is the Source of all good in this world.

At this point, teach the **פירוש המלים**.

Then you can compile a list or chart together with your students. This chart lists different types of successes/strengths and then matches them up with phrases of praise from this tefilla:

הקשר לדוד המלך <i>How it Related to Dovid Hamelech</i>	תחום ההצלחה <i>Area of Success</i>	'לך ה'...'
Dovid is praising Hashem for his success in gathering resources for the Beis Hamikdash (<i>Rashi</i>).	General success, usually referred to as גדולה	'הגדולה'
Hashem gave Dovid special strength and success in fighting victoriously against Klal Yisroel's enemies so that he would be able to take their spoils to use in building the Beis Hamikdash.	Physical strengths and abilities	'הגבורה... והנצח'
Dovid Hamelech praises Hashem for the glory and beauty of the Beis Hamikdash (<i>מצודת דוד</i>)	Outer, external beauty	'התפארת וההוד'
Hashem is the Supreme Ruler over everything; He is the One that determines each person's stature and position	Position of authority	'המתנשא לכל לראש'
Dovid Hamelech is attributing all his wealth and riches to Hashem.	Abundant wealth	'העושר והכבוד מלפניך'

In the middle of all these praises, we say 'כי כל בשמים ובארץ' —everything in the skies and on the earth is all attributed to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

At the end of all these praises, Dovid Hamelech says, 'בידך כח וגבורה ובידך לגדל ולחזק לכל' - the Malbim explains that Hashem is the one who grants or withholds success from us. In the words of the Malbim:

*Hashem sits and creates 'ladders' in the heavens—
this person He raises and that one He lowers.*

הקב"ה יושב ועושה סולמות ברקיע
מעלה לזה ומוריד לזה

THE BOTTOM LINE

The words of this tefilla can provide endless comfort, encouragement, and consolation:

Only Hashem can determine our social status, financial success, or anything else!

לך ה' הגדולה - You are the only One Who can grant our desires. Every setback, success, compliment, or criticism we receive is pre-ordained and attributed only to Hashem. What a relief—it's not in our hands!

THE CONTENT PART TWO

'ויברכו שם כבודך' - This section, as previously mentioned, was said by Bnei Yisroel before they built the second Beis Hamikdash, at a time when they were lacking the necessary resources to donate large amounts of materials to the construction. Nevertheless, they donated what little they could, and more importantly—they 'gave' themselves! Their heart and their רצון.

As long as a Yid is alive, even if all he can give is his lifeblood, he can still make a kiddush Hashem.

The sofer, R' Dovid Zaritsky, related the following story that he heard directly from the protagonist, a Holocaust survivor:

As the war progressed, I realized that the Nazi's ימ"ש were intent on taking away everything I had. My family—they captured and brought to death. My wealth and possessions—they seized and took for themselves. When I found myself completely alone, bereft of family, devoid of hope, stripped of titles and worldly possessions, I said:

'Ribbono Shel Olam! Master of the World! They took everything from me. But there is one thing that no one in this world can take from me—and that is You, my Hashem.'

In this section of the tefilla, we mention **אברהם אבינו** and the **ברית בין הבתרים**. What is the connection to this tefilla?

אברהם's circumstances could have provided all the necessary excuses for him to not recognize Hashem as the Creator of the world. We know that he was a lone voice in the world, trying to spread recognition and appreciation of Hashem's existence—'אברהם העברי'—symbolizing the fact that he was on one side of the world, and everyone else was on the other. He was on the side of ה' הכרת and they were all opposed, trying valiantly to deny Hashem's existence.

Yet, despite all the vehement opposition he was facing, despite all his נסיונות, עשרה נסיונות, he stood firm and did not give in. In every situation he faced, אברהם found a way to serve Hashem and spread recognition of His name.

The לשון of the passuk describes how elevated אברהם's madreiga was: 'ומצאת את לבבו נאמן לפניך'. In the zchus of this נאמנות, this loyalty to Hashem, אברהם זוכה to the eternal promise of the ברית בין הבתרים.

During the time when R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld z"l was the Rav of Yerushalayim, there lived an old lady who was extremely ill and frail. She suffered from a variety of afflictions and was so weak that she could not get out of bed or perform the most basic of bodily functions on her own.

Once a week, an aide would come to this lady's house to bathe her, clean her, and clean up the house. This was the one time when the sick lady was able to recite the bracha of אשר יצר (due to the cleanliness of her body and surroundings after being cared for by her aide).

***You may think:** What kind of a life was this? Surely this lady was looking forward to passing on and escaping this horrifying existence...*

In fact, the reality was quite the opposite.

Unbelievably, once a month, this lady would send a שליח to the home of R' Yosef Chaim to request of him to daven on her behalf. She asked that he daven that she merit to continue living despite her illness.

When she was asked why she wanted to live so desperately despite her tortured and compromised situation, the lady replied:

'Even in my compromised situation, I am constantly looking for ways to do mitzvos. That one 'Asher Yatzar' that I manage to say each week—that is my special mitzvah that I look forward to and wait for all week long. This one mitzvah that is within my capabilities is the reason why I want to keep living—it's the reason for my existence.'

She wasn't looking for excuses or searching for a way out—all she wanted was to keep doing mitzvos.

Such is the life of a Yid.

STORY

Even if we humans try to praise Hashem, it will only be a fraction of a fraction of the praise that is due to Him—He is so much greater than any praise we can offer.	מרומם על כל ברכה ותהילה
Hashem created the heavens, including the awesome system of the galaxies, stars, and מזלות (מצודת דוד)	אתה עשית את השמים...וכל צבאם
The whole intricate system of all the galaxies is under the complete dominion of Hashem.	וצבא השמים לך משתחווים
What is the significance of this word 'מחיה'? It is written in present tense—הוה, instead of the usual past tense. This is to express the idea that Hashem is constantly, every second of every day, sustaining the world. If He would pause for even a millisecond, the world would cease to exist.	ואתה מחיה את כולם

The above pesukim describe how the creations of the skies are all subservient to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The following pesukim describe Hashem's love for אברהם אבינו (for the reasons mentioned previously).

This change that Hashem made to אברם's name signifies that he would be אב המון גוים -the father of a multitude of nations- and expresses Hashem's love for him.	ושמת שמו אברהם
These pesukim describe the way Hashem took mercy on גאולה in בני"י and took them from מצרים to גלות.	וכרות עמו הברית
The whole intricate system of all the galaxies is under the complete dominion of Hashem.	ותרא את עני אבותנו במצרים...
This is a description of the way Hashem performed the miraculous events of קריעת ים סוף, preceding the pesukim of the actual שירת הים.	והים בקעת לפניהם

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Hashkafa-oriented:

Pass around scenario cards. For each card, give students a set amount of time to write a proper, content-based response to the scenario. Alternatively, read the scenarios out loud and choose students to verbally give their responses to the class.

- The dance that I was head of came out amazing! I put in so many hours of work choreographing it and practicing with the girls. I guess I'm majorly talented....
How can I overcome these feelings of גאווה?
- I really have to babysit my siblings tonight—it's not an excuse! It's really true! That's why I can't go visit my friend who was home sick for a few days... I have no way of doing chessed for her in this situation...
What can I tell myself to strengthen my resolve to achieve this mitzvah some other way?
- My best friend got the job I really wanted...why did they choose her instead of me?
How can I be happy for her with a full heart?
- Our group was trying to come up with an idea for a long time. In the end, my brilliant brainstorm was the one we decided to use!
Where did my 'brilliant' brainstorm really originate? What should I attribute this to?
- I really want to be well-liked and become part of a certain group of friends. I bet if I buy this outfit/bag/accessory they will notice and be sure to include me...
Who really decides if I will be popular or not? What can I think to encourage myself?

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Skill and content oriented:

Distribute cards to students. Some cards have words from the tefilla, some have the explanation. Students walk around the room and find their 'partner'—the one who has the card that matches their own.

- Hashem chose א"א out of love after he showed his loyalty
→ אשר בחרת באברם
- Hashem is the Ultimate Authority over all creations
→ והמתנשא לכל לראש
- א"א's loyalty to ד' made him זוכה to the ברית בין הבתרים
→ וכרות עמו הברית
- The physical abilities to be able to win wars
→ הגבורה...והנצח
- Hashem is the only One who has the power to raise and lower people
→ ובידך לגדל ולחזק לכל
- Hashem had mercy on בני"י when they were suffering in מצרים
→ ותרא את עני אבותנו במצרים
- Outer, physical beauty of the בית מקדש
→ תפארת וההוד
- The entire solar system bows to Hashem
→ צבא השמים לך משתחוים

נשמת כל חי

IN THIS TEFILLAH

We delineate the 'small,' everyday kindnesses that Hashem bestows upon us. We focus on Hashem's love and goodness, 'warming up' our neshama and arousing feelings of gratitude and connection.

ANTICIPATORY SET

Choose two students to perform the following skits with you.

(The students will act as secretaries in an office; you will be a customer coming to thank the secretaries for helping her with an important issue.)

Skit 1: One secretary sits behind the desk and greets the customer with a smile. The customer thanks the secretary effusively for her help, exaggerating her motions and tone to show emotion. The secretary smiles, clearly enjoying the conversation.

Skit 2: The other secretary sits at the desk and greets the customer with a smile. The customer is distracted. She mumbles a quick thank you, then continues a conversation on her cellphone as she hurries out of the office. After she leaves, the secretary is upset and thinks aloud, "No 'thank you' is better than a 'thank you' like that."

THE BOTTOM LINE

A true expression of gratitude comes from the heart, not just lip service. A 'thank you' said without any feeling does not accomplish its goal. When we approach Hashem in order to thank Him with the expression of נשמת, we must first arouse feelings of connection and gratitude within ourselves.

THE CONTENT

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING NISHMAS

We say Nishmas as part of Pesukei D'zimrah on Shabbos and Yom Tou.

The root word of 'נשמה' is נשמה. This Tefillah is expressed from deep inner gratitude, from our נשמה. For this reason, נשמה is said on Shabbos, when we are gifted with a נשמה יתירה. Our נשמה is singing this tefillah.

The greater one's connection to Hashem, the stronger one's feeling of gratitude, and the more depth and meaning his tefillah will have. The Maharal writes:

“השירה מורה על אמיתות מדרגת של בעל השירה” – ‘a song reveals the true level of the singer.’



The tefilla of Nishmas was composed by שמעון בן שטח. His name is alluded to in the words of Nishmas: שוכן עד, מי ידמה, עד הנה עזרנו, ואילו כינו, נשמת כל חי

ACTIVITY

Place five boxes on the teacher's desk, each one bearing a sign with a different kindness written on it:

- *My friend gave up her time to study with me for a difficult test.*
- *My mother bought me an expensive birthday gift.*
- *My friend lent me an important item that I had forgotten to bring on our trip.*
- *My neighbor's compliment made me feel special.*
- *My friend gave me her umbrella so I could go home on time despite the rain.*

Give each student a stack of red, yellow, and green cards. Read each of the five scenarios in turn. Have students rate their gratitude in each situation (*Red = strong feelings, Yellow = neutral feelings, Green = little or no feelings*) and slip the appropriate card into the box listing that situation.

Take out and display the cards from each scenario box so students can see the different color cards and make observations.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The more personal and important the favor is, the stronger our feelings of gratitude are. When we compare these favors to the kindnesses that Hashem does for us each second, minute, and hour of each day of our lives, our feelings of gratitude will strengthen and grow infinitely. And when we specify all the details of these kindnesses—health, parnassa, success, protection from harm, then truly “אין אנחנו מספיקים להודות”

THE CONTENT

PART TWO: CATEGORIZING THE PESUKIM

While sitting in his study one evening, Chaim hears a loud knock. His friend is at the door, shifting awkwardly from one foot to the other. He is in desperate need of a large sum of money and begs Chaim to help him out. Chaim truly wishes that he could help his friend, but that amount of money is way beyond his means. Chaim himself is not a well-to-do man; how can he extricate his friend from his financial woes?

In the above scenario, Chaim has the desire, but not the ability to help. There are many cases where these factors would be reversed—someone may have the resources to help, but might be lacking the desire or the will. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the only One Who is בעל היכולת ובעל הכוחות כלם. He alone has the ability to do anything and everything...and He only does things that are for our ultimate good. Both of these factors are present by Hashem in every scenario: the will and the resources. In the tefillah of נשמת:

- We **praise** Hashem's limitless power and ability- שבחי ה'
- We **describe** Hashem's **kindness** to us- חסדי ה'
- We **thank** Hashem for His kindness- הודי לה'

Teach the פירוש המלים. Students can then fill out blank charts categorizing the pesukim according to the above three topics.

שבחי ה'	חסדי ה'	הודו לה'
מן העולם ועד העולם אתה ק-ל	מבלעדיך אין לנו מלך...	אין לנו מלך אלא אתה
אלוקי הראשונים והאחרונים	פודה ומציל ומפרנס ומרחם	לך לבדך אנחנו מודים
מהולל ברב התשבחות	המנהג עולמו בחסד ובריותיו...	אילו פינו מלא שירה כיס...
	משיח אלמים ומתיר אסורים	אין אנחנו מספיקין להודות
	והסומך נופלים והזוקף כפופים	ממצרים גאלתנו ומבית עבדים
	מציל עני מחזק ממנו ועני...	ברעב זנתנו...מחרב הצלתנו
		מחליים רעים... דליתינו
		על כן איברים שפלגת בנו...
		הן הם יודו ויברכו...
		וכל קרב וכליות יזמרו לשמן
		נהללך ונשבחך ונברך...

שבחי ה' PRAISES OF HASHEM

At first glance, Nishmas seems to be made up of separate, individual praises. When taking a closer look, one realizes that the praises are all interconnected and blend into a single lyrical praise of Hashem. Only Hashem who is all-powerful, who rules the entire world, who is the Conductor of all generations, who is always watching the world, can guide the world with true kindness and compassion.

One of the most wondrous attributes of Hashem is ה'יה הוה ויהי – Hashem's presence is forever. Hashem guides the world through generations; a person lives only a few short years. Oftentimes, we cannot understand why something happens but many generations later, the reason is revealed. Hashem sees the complete picture of the past, present, and future, and is constantly guiding the world. This is why we praise Hashem ועד עולם and מעולם ועד עולם.

In these pesukim, we praise Hashem for His omniscience and benevolence, for only He sees all the generations and maps out their lives as part of the Big Tapestry.



When Stalin ruled over Russia, he built a transcontinental railway from Siberia to Shanghai, China. Millions of people labored to lay the foundations of this railroad, many of them freezing to death in the subzero climate. The project seemed ludicrous—a pointless project resulting in unjustifiable loss of life. Years later, with the outbreak of World War II, the Mirrer Yeshiva fled from Lithuania to Shanghai...via this very railway. It was one of the very few times the railroad was used.

חסדי ה'

KINDNESS OF HASHEM

There is no end to the kindnesses Hashem bestows upon us. We need to remember this constantly and focus on the good we receive. In times of trouble, we should rely on nobody and nothing else, for only Hashem has the ability to protect us.

Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l, the revered Mashgiach and Ba'al Mussar, was once riding in a cab and the secular Israeli driver related the following story:

"Rebbi, when my friends and I completed our army service, we decided to go on a world tour. We found ourselves in the jungles of Africa one night, when all of a sudden one of my friends woke up screaming, a boa constrictor wrapped around his neck. We tried to pull the snake off but with no success. He was turning blue, close to death. We didn't know what to do. At that point, one of us shouted to him, 'Yigal, you're going to die, at least say Shema.' Yigal started saying Shema. As soon as he finished the first passuk, the snake released him and slithered away."

The cab driver continued, "Rebbi, do you know that as a result of that incident, my friend Yigal became a baal teshuva! Today, he is frum with a beautiful religious family. They keep kosher, his wife covers her hair, and his kids all go to cheder."

Rav Levenstein responded, "That's amazing." He paused for a minute and then suddenly asked, "And what about you?"

"Me? Oh no," said the cab driver, glancing away from the road.

"It didn't happen to me. It happened to him."

We experience miracles every day, every moment, and we take them for granted. We should not let these kindnesses pass us by; the gratitude we should feel for every minute of life is infinite.

הודאה לה' THANKING HASHEM

MASHAL

A busy intersection. People rush to and fro, intent on their destinations. One man slows momentarily as a wallet lands at his feet. He picks it up, pockets it, and rushes on, happy with his find. Moments later, a second man stops as a different wallet lands at his feet! He, too, pockets it and rushes on, giving no thought to the wallet's origin. From where did these wallets appear?

In a building overlooking the intersection stands a man. His office door is jammed and he is stuck inside. Trying to think of a way out, he decides to throw the wallets out the window, hoping that someone will notice them, look up to see where they came from, and then extricate him from his plight. Alas, the finders do not glance upwards. Frustrated, the man throws a heavy office chair out the window. As it hurtles to the ground, the people look up in fright – and notice the man gesticulating frantically from the office window. He is quickly saved.

NIMSHAL

When everything is good, we may neglect to thank Hashem for His kindness. When trouble strikes, however, we suddenly remember to call out to Hashem; we come to recognize that Hashem is the One Who has protected us until now and Who can save us again. Why wait?

Hashem showers us with חסדים constantly. When everything is going well, we should thank Hashem for every single detail, and we will thus be zoche to continued חסד. The possuk says “כי אמרת הטיב” — listing the good of Hashem, “אטיב עמך” — leads to Hashem granting us even more good. The tefillah of Nishmas reminds us of this and enables us to give constant thanks and praise to Hashem.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The tefillah of Nishmas is an expression of thanks and praise, yet there is one request included: “ואל תטשנו ה' אלוֹקֵנוּ לְנֶצַח!” “And do not abandon us, Hashem, forever!”

When a person thanks ה' for good in the past and present, he must also ask that Hashem continue to give him the good in the future.

ישתבח

IN THIS TEFILLAH

*We humbly acknowledge that while
our words can never truly capture
Hashem's infinite greatness, we
nevertheless offer our praise,
recognizing that He is fully
deserving—even if we are not fully
capable.*

ANTICIPATORY SET

A young child once entered a magnificent concert hall where a world-famous orchestra was rehearsing for a grand performance. The room echoed with the sounds of violins, flutes, trumpets, and drums, all harmonizing under the guidance of a master conductor. The music was rich, layered, and profound—each note carefully placed, each movement flowing into the next with beauty and precision. The child, who had no formal knowledge of music, sat in the back row, wide-eyed and mesmerized. He didn't understand the theory behind the composition, couldn't read a single note of the sheet music, and had never held an instrument. But he was moved—deeply so. When the rehearsal ended, the child stood up and clapped with all his might. Overwhelmed by emotion, he began to sing a little tune he made up on the spot, hoping to somehow express the joy and wonder he had just experienced. Some nearby adults chuckled at the simplicity of his song. But the conductor saw him and approached with a warm smile. “Did you enjoy the music?” he asked. “Yes!” the child said eagerly. “It was the most beautiful thing I’ve ever heard. I wish I knew how to thank you all properly.” The conductor knelt beside him and replied gently, “Your clapping and your little song may be simple, but they come from a pure heart. That’s what matters.

You don't have to understand everything to respond with sincerity. Still, know this—the music you heard is deep and vast beyond your imagination. It took years of learning, of collaboration, of inspiration. You cannot fully grasp it—and that's okay. What's important is that you listened with awe and responded with love."

THE BOTTOM LINE

We are like that child when we stand before Hashem. His greatness, wisdom, and kindness are beyond human comprehension—far richer than any praise we could ever articulate. Our tefillos, our songs, our words, are but simple echoes of a divine reality far greater than we can fathom. Yet Hashem cherishes our efforts, not because they match His greatness, but because they reflect our love, humility, and desire to connect. **We acknowledge that we are inadequate to truly praise Him—but we try, because that attempt itself is beloved to Him.**

INTRODUCTION

This is the final tefillah of Pesukei D'Zimra. It's like the 'closing bookend' on the other side of ברוך שאמר. In fact, ישתבח doesn't start with the words, "ברוך אתה ד" because it's actually a continuation (and ultimately, conclusion) of the bracha that we started in ברוך שאמר. This is commonly known as a ברכה הסמוכה לחברתה - A bracha that's connected to its 'friend.' Because ברוך שאמר and ישתבח are actually two halves of a whole, we stand while reciting both of them.



There are two differing opinions as to who composed the tefillah of ישתבח:

1. R' Chaim Vital said he heard from חכם אחד that it was written by Avraham Avinu, but he wasn't mekabel it from his rebbi, the Arizal. [שמעתי מחכם אחד]

ק-ל ההאודאות, בורא כל הנשמות, רבון כל המעשים, הבוחר בשירי זמרה, מלך ק-ל חי העולמים = אברהם

2. According to the אבודרהם and the כל בו, it was written by שלמה המלך.

שמך לעד מלכנו הק-ל = שלמה

There are two main themes that run through ישתבח:

1. Hashem's power, dominion, and strength are worthy of our praise
2. Our obligation to continually praise Hashem

סדר התפילה has deep significance throughout the.

There are 15 expressions of praise in the beginning half of **ישתבח** and 15 words in the concluding bracha (after **ברוך אתה ד'**). There are also 15 **שיר המעלות**, 15 expressions of praise in **אמת ויציב**, 15 mentioned in the haggada section of **דיינו**, and 15 words in **ברכת כהנים**. The gematria of Hashem's name **ה-ק-ה** is 15.

סידור עבודת ישראל בשם השל"ה: Just as Hashem bentsches us with 15, we bentch Him with 15.

של"ה: All these 15 praises should be said in one breath, because it's one process of ascension.

גר"א: All these 15 praises should not be said in one breath, so it shouldn't sound like we are rushing to finish, or to throw off a burden, or to just 'get it over with.'



R' Yaakov Kamenetzky related that in Kelm, they made a takana allotting 45 minutes daily for the recital of Pseukei D'zimra! This was to ensure enough time to say the tefillos properly.

ישתבח שמך

The precise translation of these words is 'Your name should be praised'.

This phrase is a concession that that we are grossly inadequate to praise Hashem. We are acknowledging, however, that Hashem is worthy and deserving of praise.

ישתבח שמך לעד, מלכנו

It's important to note that the inflection of the comma in this phrase goes after **לעד**. As in: 'Your name should be praised forever, our King'. With the comma in the wrong place, it sounds like we are endorsing Hashem's infinity (**לעד מלכנו**) - 'Your name should be praised, forever our King'. Hashem doesn't need us to endorse Him or His infinity.

ישתבח שמך

Why do we say 'Your name should be praised?' Why not simply, 'You should be praised?' We can't talk about Who Hashem is, because we can't even relate to it. We only are able to see Hashem as He manifests Himself in this world. Hashem's names are how we perceive Him.

הק - ל המלך הגדול והקדוש

There are two individual praises here, and the combination of them expresses a powerful idea: Some people think that Hashem is in the Higher Realms, so it must mean He is removed and not involved here on Earth, in our mundane lives. The juxtaposition of these two praises, גדול and קדוש, expresses otherwise.

גדול - Hashem's greatness is that while being Omnipotent and Supreme, He is still involved in every detail of the 'lower worlds' as well. Though He is in the Higher realms, His presence is all over. מקדושתו למעלה - Hashem is both גדול and קדוש - accessible and inaccessible. Some people think that Hashem is in the Higher Realms, so it must mean He is removed and not involved here on Earth, in our mundane lives. The juxtaposition of these two praises, גדול and קדוש, expresses otherwise.

כי לך נאה

Hashem doesn't need our praises! So why do we say 'It's pleasant for You?' The לב אליהו explains that the particular part of our praises here that is pleasant to Hashem is the preemptive phrase that we say 'ד' אלקנו ואלקי אבותינו' - we are declaring, 'Hashem, our Hashem and the Hashem of our Fathers!' We are declaring 'Abba, I love You!' That is pleasant for Hashem. That we declare that He's our Tatty and He was our grandparents' Tatty.

שיר ושבחה	<i>orally</i>
הלל	<i>for the revealed things</i>
וזמרה	<i>using a כלי, like a musical instrument</i>
עז	<i>unending strength</i>
וממשלה	<i>a ruler who imposes himself on his people (instead of a מלך who is chosen by the people) Because Hashem is עז He can have ממשלה</i>
נצח	<i>eternal</i>
גדולה	<i>referring to קריעת ים סוף or מעשה בראשית</i>
וגבורה	<i>referring to יציאת מצרים or מכת בכורות</i>
תהילה	<i>when the sun stood still [שמש בגבעון דום] which shows that Hashem creates nature and controls it</i>

ק-ל מלך גדול בתשבחות

Some people say, 'בורא כל הנשמות' - The Yismach Yisroel explains that the word בורא is in present tense, 'Who creates'. Hashem is constantly creating and sustaining and giving us life. Inventing and re inventing on a daily basis.

הבוחר בשירי זמרה

R' Schwab: The entire בריאה sings praise to 'ד'. All the ecosystems, creations, animals, and all forms of life. Yet amongst all of nature, we were chosen to be the primary spokespeople to sing Your praise. We have a responsibility and an obligation.



טוּ וְכִן
דָּעוּ
כֵּן

R' Schwab says that our tefillah is structured like a progression through the Beis Hamikdash:

ברכות השחר = עזרת ישראל



פסוקי דזמרה = אולם



קריאת שמע = היכל



שמונה עשרה = קודש הקדשים

Just like you can't start to build the second floor of a house or building before the 1st floor or the foundation, we can't access the higher levels of tefillos (Shema, Shemoneh esrei) without first 'laying the foundation' with Pesukei D'zimra.

Chazal set up the התפילות סדר in a specific way. If someone doesn't have kavana during a specific part of davening, that 'level' of his building will be shaky and unstable.

THE BOTTOM LINE

ישתבח is more than a transitional bracha—it's the humble culmination of Pesukei D'zimra, where we acknowledge that no matter how many praises we recite, we can never truly capture Hashem's greatness. Yet, that very admission is itself a form of praise. It reflects our awe, our limits, and our deep yearning to connect. As we conclude Pesukei D'zimra and prepare to step into higher realms of connection, ישתבח reminds us that our role is not to "complete" praise—but to join a cosmic chorus, chosen to give voice to what all of creation whispers: that Hashem is both infinitely exalted and intimately present.

עלינו לשבח

IN THIS TEFILLAH

*We praise and thank Hashem that
He created us as part of the
עם הנבחר and gave us a life of
purpose and meaning, as opposed
to the other nations of the world
who live empty lives of worthless
pursuits.*

ANTICIPATORY SET

Any activator/activity/story that imbues students with the feeling of 'אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו' so as to focus them on the message of the tefillah.

EXAMPLE A:

I was looking for a parking spot the day I had to attend the start-of-year teachers' meeting. I noticed that the property adjacent to my school housed a grungy-looking apartment building. A middle-aged, rather heavyset man was sitting on his red, beach-style, folding chair outside the building. He stood out in my mind because he was sitting completely idle: not reading the newspaper, not listening to the radio, not on a phone, not talking to an acquaintance.

Just sitting.

I passed by and nodded a 'good morning' in his direction as I made my way into the school building. Four hours later, after many inspirational speeches, workshops, and a gourmet brunch, I headed back out of the school building to get back in my car and drive home. Passing by the adjacent apartment building, I stopped short in my tracks.

He was in the exact same spot.

Not reading the newspaper, not listening to the radio, not on a phone, not talking to an acquaintance.

Just sitting.

In my mind, that was a mind-blowing demonstration of the sheer futility of a goy's life. אשרינו!

EXAMPLE B

Place the following progressions of pictures on the board:

- Jewish baby, toddler, teen, adult
- non-Jewish baby, toddler, teen, adult

Zevy and John are neighbors and live in identical-looking houses on Webster Street.

Have the students enumerate and describe the various milestones in the Jewish child's life: Shalom Zachar, Bris Milah, Pidyon Haben, upsherin, Chumash seuda, Bar Mitzvah, Chuppah, Siyumim, etc. These milestones form the tapestry of a life woven with beauty, fulfillment, and meaning. Have the students contrast this with the mundane or nonexistent milestones in the life of the Non-Jew: Birthday parties, College acceptance, Climbing the rungs of the corporate ladder, etc.

Q: What is the underlying contrast in the lives and trajectories of these two people? What are the moments in these people's lives when we can see that contrast clearly defined?

THE CONTENT



was composed by יהושע, the leader of בני ישראל, when he brought them into ארץ ישראל. Why specifically then? A spiritual danger faced Bnei Yisrael when they entered Eretz Yisrael— intermingling with the goyim.

were entirely secluded during their travel in the מדבר. Far from harmful influences, secure in Hashem's שכינה, they learned תורה directly from משה רבינו. Upon entering ארץ ישראל, they were suddenly surrounded by כנענים, who worshipped all forms of עבודה זרה. Therefore, יהושע composed this special tefillah, singing of Hashem's glory and degrading all forms of עבודה זרה, to counteract the pull of the new bad influences that would surround them.

Q: Why do we say this tefillah at the end of davening?

Q: How can you compare the transition of בני ישראל heading from the מדבר into ארץ ישראל to the transition of a person finishing his תפילה and heading out to start his day?

"...to imprint in our hearts יחוד מלכות שמים before we leave (the הכנסת (בית) to our houses...because every person does some sort of business with goyim...even when we are successful, we should not be pulled toward avoda zara (and outside influences)..."

”לתקוע בלבבנו קודם שנפטרים לבתיהם יחוד מלכות שמים... כי אז גם יש לכל אחד מישראל משא ומתן עם הגויים עובדי ע”ז... ומצליחים לא נפנה ללבנו אל האלילים...” (ב”ח)

A person may have achieved great heights and truly connected to Hashem through tefillah. However, when he closes his siddur and heads out into the mundane activities of his daily schedule, he is faced with outside influences. We say עלינו to strengthen ourselves by delineating Hashem's greatness and thus we will be able to carry this message with us throughout the day.



The משנה ברורה writes that when a person says עלינו לשבח:
הקב"ה עומד עם כמליה של מעלה, וכולם עונים אמן ואומרים אשרי העם
שככה לו אשרי העם שה' אלוקיו

Q: How and why do we use the method of contrast to praise Hashem in this tefillah?

You bought a beautiful new dress for an upcoming simcha. Excitedly, you begin to describe it to your friend, with every little detail. Yet, your friend does not react with excitement. How can you get her to 'buy in' to your enthusiasm? You could try contrasting your dress with a specific Shabbos dress which she owns to help her relate and be excited for you.

THE BOTTOM LINE

So, too, in עלינו לשבח. As we prepare ourselves to glorify and praise Hashem, we impress upon ourselves the greatness of Hashem by contrasting it with the emptiness and futility of the עבודה זרה. We contrast our elevated lives of meaning with the goyim's lives of emptiness. This imbues us with a sense of awe and gratitude.

Understanding that this tefillah utilizes contrast as a means of praise can help us form a framework through which to comprehend the tefillah itself.

CATEGORIZING THE PESUKIM

After the students have learned the פירוש המלים, they can do a review activity using any of the following in-depth information/categorizations:

הבל ואפסיות הגויים	נצחיות ה'
שלא עשנו כגויי הארצות	ואנחנו כורעים...מלך מלכי המלכים הקב"ה
ולא שמנו כמשפחות האדמה	שהוא נוטה שמים ויוסד ארץ
שלא שם חלקנו בהם	ומושב יקרו בשמים ממעל
וגורלנו ככל המונם	ושכינת עזו בגבהי מרומים
שהם משתחוים להבל וריק	הוא אלקנו אין עוד
ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע	אמת מלכנו אפס זולתו
	כי ה' הוא האלקים בשמים ממעל... ועל

“גויי הארצות”

Every nation in the world except the Yidden, all the nations together

“משפחות האדמה”

Each individual nation and nationality

“משפחות האדמה”

whose entire lives and essence are “אדמה” - worldly gashmiyus

“שלא שם חלקנו כהם”

The word “portion” infers good separated from bad. We received a better separate portion than the גויים – what is this? To be the סגולה

“וגורלנו ככל המונם”

A גורל refers to something a person got by chance – even this portion for Yidden is different than that of the גויים

“שהם משתחווים להבל וריק”

Worthless, empty things

“שהם משתחווים להבל וריק”

ע” – it has only air, no reality. The goyim serve ע” – whose power is like air. Describes a lack.

ריק – it has just an outer shell, the inside is empty. The ע” seem to have power, but in reality they have nothing.

“ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע”

Nothing - It doesn't have the power to save

“נוטה שמים ויוסד ארץ”

Hashem spreads out the sky over the Earth – נוטה

“מושב יקרו בשמים ממעל”

*Hashem strengthens and upholds the Earth – ויסד
The seat of Hashem – which is the יקר
Hashem sits in the Heavens connotes הכבוד, כסא*

“אפס זולתו”

nothing - אפס

זולתו – besides for Hashem, because Hashem sustains all living things

“והשבות אל לבבך”

contemplate, not simply to know in your mind, but to feel and connect with your heart – והשבות

על בן נקוה לד

IN THIS TEFILLAH

After coming to the realization of how perfect and eternal Hashem's Malchus is (in Aleinu), we now ask that the entire world also be able realize and recognize Hashem's sovereignty-when the world comes to its ultimate purpose with the coming of Mashiach, במהרה בימינו אמן!

ANTICIPATORY SET

Any story that portrays how someone came to see, with clarity, the truth in תורה and מלכות שמים.

EXAMPLE:

At a lecture for baalei teshuva, the participants were asked what spurred them to change their lifestyle. One of the participants responded with a fascinating story:

Several months before, she had embarked on a tour of the Far East. She toured many cities and eventually arrived in Mumbai. Towards evening, she realized that her wallet was missing. Her passport, a large sum of money, her personal effects—all lost!

Imagine her despair. She had spent hours crisscrossing the metropolis, passed millions of people, where could she have lost the wallet? How would she ever find it? Exhausted and depressed, she somehow found her way to the Chabad House. There, she received a warm welcome, a listening ear, and a hot meal.

As she poured out her tale of woe, a man entered the Chabad House and announced that he had found a red wallet. He wanted to hang up signs about his find in the hope of tracking down the owner. She was shocked and overjoyed. The entire Chabad House rejoiced with her. When the excitement died down, she began to wonder what caused this man to search for an owner. Why hadn't he simply pocketed the valuable find? Nobody would ever know!

When she asked the man, he responded, "For a Jew who keeps the Torah, there is no question. There is a mitzva of אבידה השבת and that is what I must do."

This simple sentence resonated within her, spurring her on to search deeper into Yiddishkeit and find her way back to her roots.

THE CONTENT

The tefilla of על כן focuses on two main points regarding the coming of Mashiach:

- Describing how the avoda zara will be degraded and removed from the world
- Describing how Hashem's malchus will be revealed and universally recognized



The first city that Bnei Yisroel conquered when they entered Eretz Yisroel was the city of Yericho.

After their miraculous victory, Hashem forbade them from taking anything from the spoils of the city. There were two reasons for this:

- So as not to bring them to feelings of 'כחי ועוצם ידי' because the victory was completely נס, and should not be attributed at all to their own prowess and war strategies.
- To distance them from any traces of ע"ז which were contained within the possessions of the כנענים.

One person disregarded the word of Hashem and took from the spoils of Yericho-עכן. This caused a tremendous 'חילול ד'. On the day that עכן died, he did teshuva and composed this tefilla of על כן נקוה. Through the words in the tefilla that express our desire for מלכות שמים to be revealed, עכן was re-infusing the שם קידוש שם that he detracted from when he took from the spoils.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When Mashiach comes, the entire world will clearly recognize Hashem's sovereignty. That is what we are asking for in this tefillah.

CATEGORIZING THE PESUKIM

After the students have learned the פירוש המלים, they can do a review activity using any of the following in-depth information/categorizations:

השחתת ע"ז	גילוי כבוד מלכות שמים
להעביר גילולים מן הארץ והאלילים כרות יכרתון	לראות מהרה בתפארת עזר לתקן עולם במלכות ש-קי וכל בני בשר יקראו בשמך להפנות אליך כל רשעי ארץ יכירו וידעו...כי לך תכרע כל ברך לפניך ה' אלקנו יכרעו ויפלו ויקבלו כלם את עול מלכותך

“להעביר גילולים”

*Idols are disgusting, like animal manure. גלול
means dirty. They will be removed from the world*

“כרות יכרתון”

False gods will disappear

“לכבוד שמך יקר יתנו”

meaning honor. The nations will honor Hashem

“כל בני בשר”

*People who are overtly mundane and steeped in
gashmiyus- literally, like ‘meat’*

“רשעי ארץ”

*People who have strayed from the path of Hashem and
in wickedness turned to ע"ז*

“יושבי תבל”

A general term to describe the rest of humanity

CLOSURE

ACTIVITY

Distribute the following diagram for the students to fill out using phrases from the tefilla:

