

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

הללי נפשי

A Life of Praise

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Hallelu-yah! Praise Hashem, O my soul! **I will praise Hashem while I live, I will make music to my G-d while I exist.**

הללוי-ה, הללי נפשי את ה'. אהללה ה' בחיי. אזמרה לאלקי בעודי.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

The end of *Ashrei*, תהלת ה' ידבר פי, *May my mouth declare the praise of Hashem*, describes how humanity expresses its gratitude physically, with its mouth, for all the bounty which Hashem provides for the world. This first verse, 'הללי נפשי את ה', "Praise Hashem, O my soul!" goes one step higher, for it is the soul, the spiritual aspect of mankind, which praises Hashem (*Iyun Tefillah*).

The Gemara (Pesachim 117a) discusses whether the word הללוי-ה is one word and means— "Praise Him [Hashem] with many praises," or is two words (הללוי, G-d). The Gemara suggests that because הללוי-ה is comprised of two words, incorporating the Divine name (י-ה) and praise together, it is the greatest of all the ten different styles of praise in Tehillim (ניצוח, ניגון, משכיל, הללוי-ה and מזמור, שיר, אשרי, תהלה, תפילה, הודאה).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Reason for Living

A person praises Hashem during his life, and also, through the way he lives his life.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

All for Hashem

The simple meaning of 'I will praise Hashem while I live' is that while I am alive I will praise Hashem. However, a deeper meaning of 'הללה ה' בחיי' is that Hashem's praise comes about through living one's life.

Dovid HaMelech, whose life was rife with war, betrayal and pain, sought a continuous connection with Hashem from the midst of his all-too-real life struggles—'One thing I ask of Hashem, and that is what I seek: that I may dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life' (*Tehillim*, 27:4). Yet, how could Dovid HaMelech, let alone any ordinary individual, really seek to dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of his life? What time does that leave for the day-to-day routine — earning a livelihood, caring for children, sleeping, eating and all the other mundane tasks that fill our days?

Ramban (*Devarim* 6:13) explains: "...You should act towards Hashem like a servant who serves his master always... this leads to what Chazal termed, "And let all your activities be for the sake of heaven." This means that even when a person is attending to his physical needs, he should do so for the sake of serving Hashem.

For example, Chazal state, "And behold, it was very good [the culmination of creation], this refers to sleep. Is sleep a good thing? Why, a person is seemingly not accomplishing anything productive then! Yet, because a person sleeps, he awakes refreshed, and occupies himself with Torah [and Mitzvos]... and whenever he is engaged in attending to anything physical, he should keep in mind the verse, 'הללה ה' בחיי, 'I will praise Hashem while I live'."

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Live-In Service

When Mrs. Bloom became old and infirm, her family hired an aide to live with her and attend to her needs. The aide lived with Mrs. Bloom in her apartment, slept on a cot in Mrs. Bloom's bedroom, cooked for her, served her meals, helped her wash and dress each morning and night, walked with her outdoors on pleasant days and kept her company indoors the rest of the time.

One of the children became dissatisfied with the way the aide performed her job. "She's not taking care of Mommy, she's taking care of herself!"



the daughter complained to the oldest brother. "I came by at two in the afternoon, and Mommy was taking a nap. There was the aide, fast asleep in her cot, taking her nap! I look in the fridge to make sure they've got food, and what do I see? She bought herself milk, cheese, eggs – all kinds of things that Mommy can't eat!"

The older brother calmed his sister down. "She has to nap when Mommy does, because she's up at night when Mommy

wakes up. And why shouldn't she eat the food she likes? She has to stay strong and feel good to be any good to Mommy. Even when she's taking care of herself, she's taking care of Mommy. She lives with Mommy every day, and she's responsible for her 24-7."

Likewise, in our relationship with Hashem, if our goal is to "live with Him" around the clock, every day, then everything we do to keep ourselves healthy, strong, content and positive are in fact acts of service to Him. By staying healthy and strong, we are ready and able to do mitzvos and learn Torah. In this way, our lives become a praise to Hashem.

Try This!

Choose one daily activity which you perform for your own or your family's well-being. Think about the way in which this activity helps you to be able to serve Hashem. During the week, before you perform this activity, recall the connection, and recall it again each time you say the verse הללה ה' בחיי.

Did You Know

Prelude to the End of Days

Rav Schwab (*Rav Schwab On Prayer, ArtScroll, Page 183*) explains that this *mizmor*, הללי נפשי את ה' begins the last five psalms, 146-150, which conclude *Tehillim*. These last chapters envision the End of Days, which includes *yemos* (days of) *HaMashiach*, *techiyas hameisim* (Revival of the Dead), and *olam haneshamos* (spiritual world of souls after death). This first *mizmor*—הללי נפשי את ה' corresponds to our present period, the "pre-dawn," the time before Mashiach will come. This is the realm of *nefesh*. Each of the five *mizmorim* expresses praise to G-d from the standpoint of the epoch in which it is set.