

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

ישתבח

The Life of the World

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

May your Name be praised forever -- Our King ... blessings and thanksgivings ... Blessed are You, Hashem, G-d, King exalted through praises ... Who chooses musical songs of praise — King, G-d, Life-giver of the world.

ישתבח שמך לעד מלכנו...
ברכות והודאות... ברוך
אתה ה', א-ל מלך גדול
בתשבחות... הבורך
בשרי זמרה, מלך א-ל
חי העולמים:

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

In this prayer, there are fifteen expressions of praise beginning with the words שיר ושבח, and there are fifteen words in the concluding blessing (after ברוך אתה ה'). The number fifteen alludes to the numerical value of the Divine Name יה-וה and to the fifteen Songs of Ascents composed by King David (Tehillim 120-134). Mishneh Berurah (Siman 53:1) states that one

should be extremely careful not to make an interruption in-between any of the fifteen praises which are said in the blessing Yishtabach, starting with the words שיר ושבח. However, the praises are not required to be said in one breath. Since some authorities consider answering Kaddish to be an interruption, one should try to time the praises of ישתבח so that he will not have to answer amen in the middle (Kaf Hachaim 53:2).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Creator and Sustainer

Hashem brings everything in the universe into being, and sustains and supervises His creation moment by moment.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

The Basics of Emunah

Hashem is the "life-giver of the world" -- since at every moment Hashem is creating and renewing a person by "breathing" life into him. In discussing this basic element of *emunah*, the Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 1:1) states, "The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being Who brought into being all existence. All the beings of the heavens, the earth, and what is between them came into existence only from the truth of His being."

Beyond this belief in Hashem as the sole Creator, *emunah* requires recognition of Hashem's continuous role in every occurrence, from grand historical events to seemingly insignificant personal incidents. This is the concept of *Hashgachah Pratis*— that Hashem supervises His creation moment to moment, and that nothing happens by chance, but only because He constantly wills it.

Despite the centrality of this belief in Hashem's constant supervision of His creation, it may

appear, at times, to be a difficult concept for the human mind to fully grasp. The world seems to run on a system of cause and effect, conditioning people to interpret the events in their lives and in the world as results of human actions or nature. The true Power behind those human actions and nature becomes shrouded, unless one purposefully works at uncovering it. *Sefer Sifsei Chaim* (Rinas Chaim, p. 11, s.v. "LYeser diyuk") explains that G-d controls the world from behind the scenes, utilizing the magnificent natural laws He has crafted in order to fulfill His will on earth.

This understanding that nothing in Creation can exist independent of Hashem is expressed, and is strengthened, every time we pray. By coming to Hashem for our needs, we continually weed out the subtly invasive belief in cause and effect, reinforcing in our hearts that there is no "cause" but Hashem's constant will. (See *Ohr Yechezkel, Emunah* p. 64)

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Sustaining Creation

Preparing for a centuries-long journey through deep space, the spaceship was designed to support normal human life for its crew of 150. It had to provide food, air, water, places to stroll, and opportunities to exercise, socialize and live life within a self-contained mini-world coursing through outer space. Over the years, crew members married and had children, and little by little, an entire



society was established on the space ship.

The generations born on board had no concept of any world outside their ship. The renewable fuel that kept it going, the water-distilling mechanism that created new supplies of water, the self-contained greenhouses that produced the food and cleaned the air – it was, to

this society, just the "way it is." They never thought about the engineering genius that went into creating their world, nor the impossibility of living for even a few moments outside of its protective shell.

Similarly, we live in a world created and tended to by Hashem, and yet we seldom notice His continuous input. Were He to suddenly stop His continuous giving, not only would our world collapse, it would cease to exist. (*Lev Eliyahu*, Vol. 2, p. 62, s.v. *Y'sod Ha'Briah*)

Try This!

From the weeds that take root and push their way through the cracks in the pavement to the fruit flies that live, breed and die all within a day, to the fish that struggle against the currents to reach their spawning grounds to the mother bear that looms protectively around her cubs – all of life is invested with an indomitable drive to perpetuate life. Imagine this life-force as it surges through our world, and think of this power when you say the words: חי העולמים.

Did You Know

► *The Closing*

The ישתבח prayer ends the Pesukei D'Zimrah section of Shacharis. Despite the fact that ישתבח is a blessing, it does not begin with the standard wording of a blessing ברוך אתה, because ישתבח is a continuation of the blessing at the end of Baruch She'amar, which is said at the beginning of Pesukei D'Zimrah (Siman 54:1). Therefore, ישתבח is not recited unless Baruch She'amar is recited (Siman 53:2; Mishneh Berurah, Ibid 53:3). ישתבח should be recited while standing (Siman 53:1, Mishneh Berurah, Ibid:1).