



# TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

## TEFILLA

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative

When people first meet me, they often ask me about the origins of my name – Zemira. I explain to them that when I was born, my parents decided they wanted to name me after my great grandmother Celia and so they began searching for a Hebrew name beginning with a similar sound. Being new Baalei Teshuva, they used a Jewish name book to find a good Jewish name. After scanning all of the names beginning with an “s” or “tz” or “z” sound, they settled on the name Zemira, not realizing how uncommon the name was. As a child, I resented the uniqueness of the name, but my parents reassured me that in Israel, Zemira was a very common name. Upon arriving in Israel, I was eager to meet all of the many

**Hello**  
my name is

women who would share my name, but alas, I have yet to meet even one! Today, I am quite fond of my name but am always happy to uncover more layers of meaning to the name and its essence.

With that intro, we begin our study of פסוקי דזמרה the section of Shacharit which spans from ברוך שאמר through ישתבח. Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhov, author of the Menorat Hameor, writes that פסוקי דזמרה comes from the root לזמור, to prune. (That's right, call me Prunella!) Just like a farmer removes all of the bad branches from the vine, leaving only the good branches to grow, so too, these words of זמרה that we sing before we get to Shemonah Esrei, allow us to remove any obstacles blocking us from reaching Hashem, so that when we get to



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Shemonah Esrei, we are prepared and ready to daven in the most ideal way to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Rav Reuven Melamed in his sefer, Tefillat Chana, expands on this and writes that one way that we do that is that as we praise Hashem over and over again for all that He does in this world, we slowly but surely remove all of our feelings of arrogance and self-importance. By "pruning" ourselves of our egos, we make room to really connect to Hashem in our Shemonah Esrei.

So we see that the goal of Pesukei dZimra is really to prepare ourselves for a perfect Shemonah Esrei. Chazal explain in Gemara Avoda Zara 7b "לעולם יסדר שבחו של מקום ואחר כך יתפלל", we need to focus ourselves by first singing praise to Hashem and only then get to the crux of our tefilla in the Shemonah Esrei. The Rosh explains that the Pesukei Dzimra help us to get into the right mindframe, giving us the seriousness as well as the happiness) *Simcha shel Mitzvah* (needed for a good davening).

The Sefer HaChasidim writes that this section of the Tefillah is so important that even if we don't know all of the Pesukim

and we make some mistakes when we say them, it makes Hashem extremely happy and is accepted like the *ריח ניחוח* (sweet fragrance of the Korbanot).



And how much more so, if we do manage to say them properly! Therefore, the Shulchan Aruch writes (51:68) that one shouldn't rush through this section but rather say it *בנחת*, slowly and pleasantly. The Mishna Berura explains this means that we should be careful not to skip or swallow any words. Just like one who counts his coins at the end of a hard day's work, will do slowly and carefully, making sure to not even miss one, so too, we need to say the words of the davening as if we were counting and appreciating each one. The Kaf Hachaim says that through this, one will be awakened with *yiraa* and *ahava* towards HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

What an opportunity! What a special Tefilla! And what a name (thanks to my parents and their name book)! ■

— Cut and paste into your siddur — — — — —



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