



# TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

## TEFILLA

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## מזמור לתודה

Every day, Chaim would sit and learn for an hour in the shul by himself after Shacharit. He enjoyed the peace and quiet of his early morning learning session. On Wednesday, Chaim finished up his learning session at 8:32 and headed off to work. At 8:33, there was a crash as the enormous chandelier fell to the floor of the shul, right in the spot that Chaim had been sitting. A few hours later, the shul's caretaker entered the shul to clean and organize the shul. To his shock, he noticed the huge chandelier lying on the floor. He knew the screws had gotten a little loose and he had planned to fix it later that day. "Baruch Hashem, no one was in the shul when this fell", he thought to himself. "This chandelier easily could have knocked someone unconscious or worse". He quickly put the chandelier back up,

making sure everything was in tight. On Thursday morning, Chaim sat down again for his early morning learning session, whistling as he learned, enjoying the serenity and peace of mind it gave him, never realizing how his session the day before nearly could have ended in tragedy.

Unbeknown to us, these types of hidden miracles occur to us every single day. It was for this reason that our Rabbis instituted the daily recital of מזמור לתודה. During the times of the Beit HaMikdash, when one experienced a miracle or was saved from tragedy, he would bring a Korban Todah in thanksgiving. Upon bringing the Korban Torah, he would recite מזמור לתודה, a mizmor which is found in Sefer Tehillim (פרק ק). The ש"ח writes that today, since we experience countless hidden miracles every single day, we recite this mizmor daily, in lieu of the Korban Todah. The only exceptions are days when a Korban

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Todah could not be brought including Shabbat, Yom Tov, and all of Pesach (since the korban consisted of Chametz).

In this mizmor, we find the very famous song – עבדו אתה' בשמחה. The כף החיים explains that we recite this at this point in our Tefilla to remind us that our davening should be b'simcha. We should have a smile on our face as we daven! To put us into this mode, the Shulchan Aruch brings down l'halacha that this mizmor specifically should be put to song, and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in his book הליכות שלמה urges shuls to put this into practice. Mesilat Yesharim quotes a midrash that says when one stands up to daven, he should do so with happiness, because he is being given the opportunity to speak with HaKadosh Baruch Hu! He says that this is שמחה אמיתית, true happiness – the recognition that we are zocheh to serve Hashem!

We next arrive at the words דעו כי ה' הוא האלקים, הוא עשנו ולא/ולו אנחנו. The Midrash Bereishit Rabbah explains that this pasuk can be understood in two ways. According to the first opinion, Rabbi Yehuda bar Simon, it means that we should recognize that Hashem has created us and not (ולא) us. We didn't create ourselves; Hashem is our Creator. According to the second opinion, Rebbi Acha, it means that Hashem created us and to Him (ולו) we dedicate ourselves. In fact, this pasuk is a קרי וכתוב, words that are written one way in the Tanach but read another way. It is written ולא and read ולו. The Dubno Maggid explains that this is because we need to concentrate on both meanings as we say these words.

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Let's analyze how these two explanations fit together. The first explanation ולא אנחנו seems almost juvenile. Obviously, Hashem created us and we did not create ourselves! But the point is that although we know that intellectually, we don't always remember it. We go through our lives living an illusion and acting as though we are all-powerful and in control. These words put us back in our place, humble us and bring us back to reality. Only once we accept this reality can we then move on to the level of ולו אנחנו.

The Baal HaTanya explains that we can understand this by looking at how a seed grows. The seed's embryo is protected by the walls of the seed. Only once the walls of the seed break open, can the roots of the plant break out and connect to the ground in order to grow. So too, only once we break down our walls, and recognize ולו אנחנו, can we then connect to Hashem ולו אנחנו and grow properly.

The Pnei Moshe explains that the word

תודה comes from the word דוּי (admission). When we bring a Korban Todah after having been saved from tragedy, we recognize and admit both ולא אנחנו and ולו אנחנו. We do not run the show, we cannot survive without Hashem's intervention, and therefore we are completely and totally dedicated and subservient to Him.

We end off the mizmor – בואו שעריו בתודה, - חצרותיו בתהילה - We therefore will come to Hashem's gates with תודה, which the חיי אדם explains refers to Korbanot, as well as with תהילה, which refers to Tefilla.

We will call out to Hashem to thank Him כי Hashem's - טוב ה' לעולם חסדו ועד דור דור אמונתו חסד is forever and his אמונה is for every generation. The חיי אדם explains that אמונה refers to the good that Hashem grants us based on what we deserve. חסד refers to the good that Hashem grants us even when we don't deserve it. We are indebted to Hashem for both and use this mizmor to recognize that on a daily basis. ■

— Cut and paste into your siddur —



The words דנו כי ה' הוא האלקים, הוא עשנו ולא ולו אנחנו can be understood in two ways – 1. We should recognize that Hashem has created us and not (ולא) us. We didn't create ourselves; Hashem is our Creator. 2. It also means that Hashem created us and to Him (ולו) we dedicate ourselves. Let's analyze how these two explanations fit together. The first explanation ולא אנחנו seems almost juvenile. Obviously, Hashem created us and we did not create ourselves! But the point is that although we know that intellectually, we don't always remember it. We go through our lives living an illusion and acting as though we are all-powerful and in control. These words put us back in our place, humble us and bring us back to reality. Only once we accept this reality can we then move on to the level of ולו אנחנו, dedicating ourselves completely to Hashem.