

THE HALACHAH SHEET

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Pesukei D'zimrah

Introduction

- When Moshe Rabbeinu davened to be able to enter Eretz Yisrael, he preceded his request with praising Hashem. Chazal learn from this that the order of *tefillah* must be praise and only afterward *bakashos*. Pesukei D'zimrah was therefore instituted to fulfill the requirement of praise before the *tefillah* of *bakashos* — Shemoneh Esrei.¹ Pesukei D'zimrah also serves to sever the spiritual forces that attempt to block one's *tefillas* from being accepted. Accordingly, the word "zimrah," as its root ז-מ-ר indicates, means to prune or sever.²

Pesukim of Praise

- Speed.** Pesukei D'zimrah should be said at a pace that will allow you to read every word accurately and with intention. The *poskim* say that these *tefillas* should be said with the same attention and focus one would use when counting money.³ As such, it's permissible for one to go back and repeat a word or phrase that he said without intention.⁴
- Zeman.** The earliest time to say Pesukei D'zimrah with its berachos (Baruch She'amar and Yishtabach) is already from after *chatzos halaylah* (before *alos*). The latest time to say it with berachos is at *chatzos hayom*.⁵

Interrupting

- Talking.** After saying Baruch She'amar, it is forbidden to speak until you conclude Tachanun.⁶ If necessary, it is permitted to communicate by signaling or writing.
- Responses.** One could answer the following responses during Pesukei D'zimrah (preferably in between paragraphs):
1) Amen: (but not *baruch Hu u'baruch Shemo*) to any berachah; **2) Kaddish:** only the first three amens (including *amen yehei Shemei rabbah*); **3) Kedushah:** "Kadosh kadosh..." "Baruch shem..." and "Yimloch..."; **4) Barechu:** after Yishtabach and in response to someone's *aliyah*; **5) Modim d'Rabbanan:** in its entirety.⁷
- Timely mitzvos.** If *sof zeman krias Shema* is approaching, one should interrupt Pesukei D'zimrah and say Krias Shema. Additionally, berachos that cannot be said after Shemoneh Esrei (*al netilas yadayim*, Elokai Neshamah, and *birchos haTorah*) can be said in the middle of Pesukei D'zimrah. Asher Yatzar and the berachos made when putting on tefillin can also be said mid-Pesukei D'zimrah.⁸

Skipping

- Coming late.** If there isn't sufficient time for you to say the entire Pesukei D'zimrah before the *tzibbur* reaches Shemoneh Esrei, you must skip parts of it to enable you to daven together with them [see Halachah Sheet: *Coming Late to Davening* for in-depth discussion on the topic].
- Minimum.** The bare minimum of what you need to say in Pesukei D'zimrah is **a) Baruch She'amar**, **b) Ashrei**, and

c) *Yishtabach*.⁹ This is even at the expense of missing *tefillah b'tzibbur*. The only exception is if it's nearly *sof zeman krias Shema* or *sof zeman tefillah*, in which case these should be skipped. If you have time to say more than the minimum (but not everything), the order of priorities is as follows:¹⁰

- The **Hallelukahs**. Among them, the order of importance is the fifth, the third, and then the rest.
 - Va'yevarech Dovid** until the words "*I'shem tefartecha*"
 - Hodu** until the words "*v'hu rachum*"
 - Az Yashir**¹¹ or **Mizmor L'Sodah**¹²
- Shabbos.** All of the *mizmorim* that we say on a weekday take precedence over the additional ones that we say on Shabbos. An exception to this is Nishmas, which is included in the minimum of what must be said and not skipped.¹³

Breakdown

Mizmor Shir

- In *Mizmor Shir Chanukas HaBayis (Tehillim 30)*, Dovid HaMelech describes how he turned to Hashem when he was sick, and praises and thanks Hashem for healing him. Since most of Pesukei D'zimrah consists of *pesukim* composed by Dovid, we say this *perak* beforehand to reveal his righteousness.¹⁴

Baruch She'amar

- Baruch She'amar was instituted by Anshei Knesses HaGedolah after they found this *tefillah* on a note that fell from *Shamayim*.¹⁵ It opens with ten phrases that each begin with the word *baruch*, corresponding to the ten *ma'amaros* with which Hashem created the world.¹⁶ It concludes with a berachah complete with praise, which serves as the "*berachah rishonah*" of Pesukei D'zimrah.¹⁷
- Stance.** Baruch She'amar should be said standing, and men should hold the front two tzitzis in their hand. Kiss and release the tzitzis at the conclusion of the berachah.¹⁸
- Amen.** The ability to answer amen when you're in the middle of Baruch She'amar depends which part you're up to:¹⁹
 - From the beginning until the first "Baruch Atah Hashem"** — You can answer amen to any berachah.
 - Between the first "Baruch Atah Hashem" and the second one** — Answer amen to any berachah except for that of someone else's Baruch She'amar.
 - Second "Baruch Atah Hashem" until conclusion** — Don't answer amen to any berachah.
- Conclusion.** Upon finishing Baruch She'amar, begin Hodu immediately, as the berachah of Baruch She'amar is on Pesukei D'zimrah.²⁰ Nevertheless, you can answer amen to a berachah you overhear at this time.

1. ברכות (לב). 2. שערי אורה 3. שו"ע (נא:ח) 4. אור לציון (ז:לט) 5. מחנה ישראל (א:ג,ו-ח) (רפח:א). 6. שו"ע (נא:ד) 7. אשי ישראל עמ' קנג 8. שם 9. רמ"א (נב:א) 10. שו"ע, רמ"א (שם) 11. חיי אדם 12. ערו"ה (נבו:ו) 13. מ"ב (נב:סק"ה) 14. ערו"ה (נד:ד) 15. מ"ב (נא:סק"א) 16. שבילי הלקט ס' ד' 17. מ"ב (נא:סק"ו) 18. מ"ב (נא:סק"א) 19. עיני אשי ישראל עמ' קנג 20. מ"ב (נא:סק"ד)

Hodu

- Hodu wasn't originally part of Pesukei D'zimrah, but rather was added to the siddur later on. Those who daven *Nusach Sefard* and *Eidut Mizrach* say it before Baruch She'amar to highlight this distinction. Hodu consists of two parts: **1)** Two groups of *pesukim* from *Diverei HaYamim I* (16:8–22, 23–36), which are similar to *pesukim* in *Tehillim* (105, 96). These *pesukim* were recited in front of the Aron on a daily basis before it was initially placed in the Beis HaMikdash by Shlomo HaMelech, one set in the morning, and the other in the afternoon.²¹ **2)** From "רממו," the phrases are a collection of twenty-two *pesukim* of *rachamim* and *bitachon* from *Tehillim*.
- **Skipping.** Since Hodu wasn't originally part of Pesukei D'zimrah, it's among the first *tefillos* you should skip in the event you need to catch up to the *tzibbur*. Furthermore, if you have time to say part of it, the first part takes precedence over the second, which was only a later addition.²²

Mizmor L'Sodah

- This *tefillah* was sung by the *Levi'im* in the Beis HaMikdash when a *korban todah* was brought. It's an expression of gratitude for all of the good that Hashem bestows upon us.
- **Simchah.** The *poskim* emphasize that this *tefillah* should be said with feelings of simchah.²³
- **Standing.** Many stand while saying Mizmor L'Sodah.²⁴
- **Omit.** On days that the *korban todah* wasn't brought (e.g., Shabbos, yom tov, erev Pesach), this *tefillah* is omitted.²⁵

Yehi Chevod

- The *tefillah* of Yehi Chevod was instituted as an introduction to Ashrei. It mentions the name of Hashem twenty-one times (twenty times explicit, and once in *roshei teivos*), paralleling the twenty-one *pesukim* of Ashrei.²⁶

Ashrei and Hallelukahs

- The last six *mizmorim* of *Tehillim* are considered the *ikar* of Pesukei D'zimrah. The last five begin and end with the highest term of praise — "*hallelukah*" — and Tehillah L'David (Ashrei) introduces and contains the roots of these five *perakim* that follow it.²⁷ Chazal say that one who says Ashrei three times daily is a guaranteed *ben Olam Haba*.²⁸ This uniqueness stems from the fact that it praises Hashem alphabetically, and that it praises Hashem for being the Provider and Sustainer of everything.²⁹
- **פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ.** You must have kavanah while reciting the *pasuk* "...פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ."³⁰ If you didn't, and realize later on in Pesukei D'zimrah, say it with kavanah right then and continue Ashrei until the end, then resume from where you were up to. If you realize even after *shacharis*, say it right then with kavanah and continue until the end of Ashrei.³¹ It's customary to touch and kiss your tefillin when reciting this *pasuk*.

Baruch...Amen v'Amen

- After concluding the fifth Hallelukah (the last *perek* in *Tehillim*), we say four additional *pesukei Tehillim*. These *pesukim* conclude different sections of *Tehillim*.

- **Berachah.** These *pesukim* can function as a makeshift "berachah" before or after Pesukei D'zimrah. Therefore, in an extenuating circumstance when you must interrupt Pesukei D'zimrah, say these four *pesukim* before you stop, and then again before resuming from where you left off.³²

Vayevarech David

- Vayevarech David consists of two groups of *pesukim*. The first set is from *Divrei HaYamim I* (ch. 29), where Dovid HaMelech praised Hashem after completing all the necessary preparations for building the Beis Hamikdash. The second set is from *Nechemiah* (ch. 9), a praise and *tefillah* sung by the *Levi'im*. This *tefillah* and Az Yashir were included in Pesukei D'zimrah as an introduction to Yishtabach. Yishtabach contains fifteen different terms and phrases of praise, which Chazal found hinted to in these collections of *pesukim*.³³
- **Standing.** It is customary to stand from Vayevarech David until the conclusion of Pesukei D'zimrah.³⁴
- **Skipping.** When one omits part of Pesukei D'zimrah in order to catch up with the *tzibbur*, the first part of Vayevarech David (concluding with the words "*I'shem tefartecha*") takes priority over the second.³⁵

Az Yashir

- Az Yashir was added to Pesukei D'zimrah after the Churban of Yerushalayim to instill *emunah* within us in *galus*.³⁶ Chazal say that one who says it *b'simchah*, envisioning himself experiencing Kri'as Yam Suf, will merit to have all of his sins forgiven.³⁷

Yishtabach

- Yishtabach is the "*berachah acharonah*" on Pesukei D'zimrah. It contains fifteen terms of praise. They are paralleled in many places (e.g., the fifteen *perakim* of "*Shir hama'alos*" in *Tehillim*, the fifteen praises mentioned in Kaddish, and the fifteen mentioned in Emes V'Yatziv). Shlomo HaMelech said it when he sat on his throne for the first time, recognizing and attributing the ultimate *malchus* to the King of kings. His name is hinted to in the opening words:

"ישתבח שמך לעד מלכנו הקל".³⁸

- **Without pause.** The fifteen praises (beginning "שיר ושבחה" until "ברכות והודות") should be said continuously, without any pause or interruption.³⁹
- **Concluding.** Yishtabach should be said immediately upon concluding Pesukei D'zimrah. Therefore, if you finish Pesukei D'zimrah ahead of the *shaliach tzibbur*, say Yishtabach and then wait for Barechu.⁴⁰ This applies even on Shabbos and yom tov.

.21 סדר עולם פרק יד 22. שו"ע (נב"א): 23. קיצוש"ע (יד:ד) 24. שם 25. רמ"א (נא:ט)
 26. מטה משה מט 27. עיין ארוממך אלוקי המלך עמ' 28. 296. ברכות (ד:): 29. טור (נא:ז)
 30. שו"ע (נא:ז) 31. מ"ב (נא:סק"ט) 32. מ"ב (נא:סק"ז) 33. טור (נא) 34. עיין רמ"א
 (נא:ז), קיצור שו"ע (יד:ד) 35. מ"ב (נא:סק"ד) 36. עיין מחזור וטרי (רה) 37. מ"ב (נא:סק"ז)
 38. עיין ארוממך אלוקי המלך עמ' 327 39. מ"ב (נא:סק"א) 40. מ"ב (נג:סק"ט)