



MESIBOS SHEL SHABBOS

WITH RABBI MORDECHAI Z. HECHT

“PSUKEI D’ZIMRAH” • קבלת שבת

~Friday Night Prayers: 1~

We can all agree that Shabbos – Friday Night prayer services is some of the most inspiring and most enjoyable prayer services in Jewish tradition.

We’ve showered, we’re all dressed up for Shabbos, our work is behind us, the Shabbos candles grace our homes and synagogues and the day of rest lies ahead of us, as we finally arrive at shul and we begin to pray.

It is this precise junction that we focus on here. The Friday night Service is also called *Kabbalat Shabbat* – the “Shabbos reception”. You know how you come in to a hotel lobby, reception area, the couches are all laid out so perfectly, the lighting, the décor and the music which plays subtly in the air, well it’s something like that except here we are the one’s singing and becoming part of the material fiber of the words and we ride the waves of the musical notes, attempting to usher in an elated experience.

But then you begin to recite words of the liturgy – the prayer book, compiled some 1,000 years ago, and wonder why. Why these words precisely? Truth be told, the answer lies precisely in the well of depth in the words themselves - so let’s get started.

We can divide the Kabbalas Shabbos prayers into 5 parts:

- 1) The 6 chapters of *Tehillim*, 95,96,97,98,99,29,
- 2) *Lecha Dodi* thru *Borechu* 3) *Borechu* till the end of *Shema* 4) The *Amidah* 5) After the *Amidah* till after the final prayer of *Al Tirah*.

The 6 Chapters of *Tehillim* correspond to the 6 days of the week. If you add up the first letter of each of these paragraphs, which includes Lamed, of *Lechu*, Shin of *Shiru*, Yud of *Hashem*, Mem of *Mizmor*, Yud of *Hashem*, Mem of *Mizmor*, we get 430, which is the same numerical value of the word *Nefesh*, which means soul – which

refers to the *Soul*, our souls, which a) G-d restores and replenishes each week through the blessing that is Shabbos, and b) The “*Neshomah Yiseirah* - additional soul” that we get each Shabbos just for Shabbos. (see *siddur Otzar Hetefilah*)

The first of these 6 chapters is *Lechu Neraminah*, (ch. 95). This chapter is the opening of our Shabbos experience. The *Malbim* explains that this chapter speaks of G-d’s presence in nature and above nature. This correlates well with why recite it Friday Night, corresponding to the weekdays and the Shabbos. In this chapter we further speak of the joy and jubilation that makes us “raise our voice in song to our Rock and Salvation”. We are thanking Hashem for all the future goodness he will bestow upon us and that G-d has in store for us. In fact we are also referring to a future-time, which Shabbos is but a taste of, and we rejoice in the knowledge of this fact - that one day we will be totally free to serve Hashem – Shabbos all week – without any restrictions of mundane and corporeal challenges.

We further read about the days in Egypt and how we were challenged and restricted to serving Hashem, how we were impaired and deeply challenged. We reflect on all the blessings that is our freedom-to-serve Hashem now, without sorrow and anguish. In turn it is a song of reflection and a song of faith and hope, it is a song where we reflect on our week gone by, but look brightly toward to a new and bright future.

Actionable lesson: Sing and get lost in the song.