

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

ברכת קריאת שמע: אהבה רבה (אהבת עולם)

In Awe

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

...Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah, attach our hearts to Your commandments, and unify our hearts to love and fear Your Name...

...והאר עינינו בתורתך,
ודבק לבנו במצותיך,
ויחד לבבנו לאהבה
וליראה את שמך...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



When we request that Hashem attach our hearts to mitzvos, ודבק לבנו במצותיך we use the singular word (לבנו).

When we ask Hashem to attach our hearts to love and fear His Name, ויחד לבבנו לאהבה וליראה, את שמך we use the plural word (לבבנו).

The Gemara (*Berachos 54a*) teaches that when referring to loving and fearing G-d, the plural language for the word "heart", "לבבך", is used ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך, You shall love Hashem, your G-d "with all your heart," referring to both the good and evil inclination, as the word "heart" is a metaphor for the place of craving (*Magid Tzedek*).

The Gemara (*Berachos 63a*) states: "What is a short verse upon which all the fundamentals of Torah depend? It is: 'In all your ways you must know Him, and He will straighten your path.'" (*Mishlei, 3:6*).

The Rambam (*Hilchos Deios 3:2-3*) maintains that "in

all your ways you must know Him" teaches that all of a person's activities, not just the mitzvos, must be performed for the sake of Heaven. This means that when a person performs any mundane physical activity, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, doing household chores, or engaging in business, he must act with the intention to serve Hashem, even though there is inevitably a component of these activities that is driven by physical needs and desires. In doing so, the person channels both inclinations to serve Hashem.

However, when we ask Hashem to attach our heart to mitzvos, ודבק לבנו במצותיך, we use the singular for the word heart, "לבנו"—referring to the good inclination, because the evil inclination is not involved in performing mitzvos. When we request to love and fear Hashem's Name, לאהבה וליראה את שמך, we use the plural for the word heart—referring to both the good and evil inclination.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Relating to Hashem

Love and fear work together to secure our connection with Hashem.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Fear, Awe and Love

Nefesh HaChaim (*Shaar 4, Ch. 4*) observes that the words "Serve G-d with יראה ..." (*Tehillim 2:11*) teach that יראה is the primary tool that secures our connection with G-d, as it ensures that we cling to His will with tenacity. *Rabbeinu Yonah (Iggeres HaTeshuvah)* explains that of all the qualities one must possess to serve Hashem, יראה is first and foremost, signified by the fact that the Torah (*Devarim 13:5*) lists יראה first: "Hashem, your G-d, shall you follow and Him shall you fear; His commandments shall you observe and to His voice shall you hearken; Him shall you serve and to Him shall you cleave." This begs the question: why in our prayer do we beseech G-d first: ויחד לבבנו לאהבה "unify our hearts to love G-d," and then ויראה את שמך "to fear His Name?" It would seem that our request for יראה should precede our request that we be inspired to love G-d.

The question is answered by a closer look at

the meaning of יראה. Although the word as used in the Torah (*Devarim 13:5*) is translated and understood as "fear," the Rambam (*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 2:2*) defines יראה as "awe." Recognizing Hashem's greatness not only leads us to love Him, but to be "in awe" of Him as well. Our love of G-d is akin to the love a child has for his father; the child holds the father in such high esteem that he wishes to avoid ever displeasing him.

The יראה that we define as "fear" is יראת העניש, the fear of punishment for sin, either in this world or the next. The greater level of יראה — יראת הרוממות, which is awe of Hashem — is associated with recognizing Hashem's greatness. Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian (*Lev Eliyahu*) explains that the request for יראה cited in this prayer is יראת הרוממות, which a person can achieve only after cultivating a powerful love of Hashem.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Aiming to Please

Yaakov was a renowned surgeon. Nevertheless, he loved to spend as much time as possible building his family's sukkah with the help of his son Chaim. Chaim adored his father. He understood that people held his father in very high esteem, that his skill and intelligence were sought after, that he saved lives for a living. Yet he also knew that his father loved him deeply and enjoyed nothing more than spending time with him. So it was that during one pre-Yom Tov period, when his father became unusually busy with a spate of emergencies, Chaim did not mind taking on the huge job of building the large, complicated wooden sukkah



all by himself.

Succos was fast approaching when one day, Chaim's friend stopped by and asked him to take a break and go with him to play basketball.

"No, I've gotta work on the sukkah," Chaim replied.

"That's all you've done the whole bein hazmanim (vacation) so far!" his friend retorted. "I'm sure your father won't mind if you take a break!"

But Chaim had planned to finish that day. He could imagine his father's expression of delight when he came home that evening and saw the finished sukkah standing

proud and solid. He was even going to put up the decorations so that it would really look complete. There was no enjoyment to be had on the basketball court that would be greater than seeing the look of pride and joy on his father's face.

"No," Chaim stated firmly. "I'm going to finish the sukkah."

Like Chaim, we know how much our Father, Hashem, loves us and how much we love Him. When we imbue ourselves with the sense of His greatness and His love for us, we want to return His love. This mutual love leads to "awe", and not wanting to disappoint Him. Like Chaim, we can rise to the level of יראת הרוממות, doing Hashem's will solely for the sake of pleasing Him.

Try This!

► Think of someone for whom you have tremendous regard and respect – someone before whom you would always want to display your best traits. Imagine going to visit that person in his home. How would you feel knocking on the door? Waiting for him to enter the room? Recall these feelings when saying the words ויחד לבבנו לאהבה וליראה את שמך.

Did You Know

► **Fulfilling the Blessings on the Torah**

If a person does not recite *birchas HaTorah* during the *birchas hashachar* as required, he may continue his prayers until he recites the blessing (אהבת עולם) רבה רבה which may serve as the blessing for the Torah (*Mishneh Berurah, Siman 47:19*). When doing so, he should have in mind that he is reciting רבה רבה to satisfy his *birchas HaTorah* requirement (*Teshuvos V'hanhugos Volume 4:110*).

Since the main reason for reciting the blessing (אהבת עולם) רבה רבה is *not* for the purposes of studying Torah, a person must study Torah immediately after the Shacharis service in order for the (אהבת עולם) רבה רבה blessing to satisfy his obligation to recite *birchas HaTorah* (*Mishneh Berurah 47:15*). If he does not study Torah after praying Shacharis, according to many authorities, the (אהבת עולם) רבה רבה blessing cannot serve as his *birchas HaTorah* blessings.