

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

עזרת אבותינו

The Cry of a Prayer

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Exalted and uplifted, great and awesome... Who responds to His people upon their outcry to Him. Praises to the Supreme G-d... Moshe and the children of Israel exclaimed a song to You ...and they all said, "Who is like You among the heavenly powers, Hashem!"

רם ונשא, גדול ונורא...
ועונה לעמו בעת
שועם אליו. תהלות
לא-ל עליון... משה ובני
ישראל לך ענו שירה...
ואמרו כלם. מי כמכה
באלים ה'...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The Midrash (*Rashi, Devarim 3:23*) states that the Torah uses ten different words to refer to prayer. These ten synonyms include "hischanen" (pleading), "tze'aka" (crying out), "shav'ah" (outcry) and seven others. Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus points out (*Sheorim B'Tefillah, Page 36*) that the Hebrew word often used to refer to prayer – *bakasha* (a personal request) -- is not included in the list of ten synonyms for prayer.

awareness, according to Rabbeinu Yonah (*Sha'arei Teshuvah, Sha'ar 1, Haikur 15*) is the cornerstone of effective prayer:

"If he desires sustenance, he must stand and pray and resolve in his soul that without tefillah he will not have his sustenance. This will result in his placing his trust in Hashem ... [and] because of that [Hashem] will help him."

On a daily basis, we often fail to perceive the urgent need to call upon Hashem for our success. Our ever-increasing understanding of the secrets of nature likewise contributes to a disconnection from the essential and pervasive role played by prayer. When we are able to cure so many illnesses, develop such advanced technology and access so much information, we can more easily than ever lull ourselves into believing that we have it "all under control" without the need to seek G-d's help.

The reason for this seeming omission is that making requests of G-d is not the main feature of effectual prayer. Rather, the core purpose is to develop the keen recognition that without Hashem, a person has nothing. As one proceeds in his prayer, he comes to realize that this is so. This leads him to pray on the level of *shav'ah*, outcry, which is what happens when one feels that his total existence depends on G-d. This

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Depending on Hashem

Our prayer should be in the form of an outcry to Hashem, expressing how much we need Him for everything in our lives.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Always Heartfelt

The Torah relates the following despairing depiction of the Jews' exodus from Egypt: "Pharaoh approached. The Jewish people raised their eyes and behold the Egyptians were journeying after them and they were very frightened and they cried out to Hashem." Their situation was desperate and they appeared to be doomed. Pharaoh was pursuing them, the sea was before them, and wild animals threatened them in the desert (*Shemos Rabbah 21:5*).

Rashi (*Shemos, 14:10*) explains that, in this terrified state, they "grasped the handicraft of the Patriarchs," a phrase which refers to prayer. Why, Rav Yeruchum Levovitz (*Sefer Daas Torah, B'Shalach, Perek 14, Posuk 10*) asks, is the Jew's desperate prayers, recited in a moment of terror, compared to the "Patriarchs handicraft," which refers to the regular morning, afternoon

and evening prayers?

His answer reveals the underlying approach to any prayer a person utters, whether in good times or times of great challenge: For the Patriarchs, there was no difference in the emotional content of desperate prayers and their regular prayers, for they keenly felt that one depends upon Hashem's kindness and protection from minute to minute.

A person has only what Hashem ordains that he should have, and thus, he is at all times praying for his life, his success and every morsel he consumes. King David expresses this bedrock concept in Tehillim (20:8): "Some with chariots, and some with horses, but in the name of Hashem, our G-d, we call out." Trust in Hashem is a person's only true possession.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

The Only Strategy

When a situation gets desperate, a common phrase people use is, "Only G-d can help us now." That might mean that all treatments and medicines have been tried and have failed to cure an illness. Or it might mean that every conceivable avenue has been explored, to no avail, in an effort to thwart a financial disaster. Or, it could mean that a situation is so dangerous that only a miracle



can bring one through safely. Whenever this phrase is used, it means that "human means" have been exhausted, and so, the individual facing a particular struggle casts his lot with Hashem.

But Rav Nachman of Breslov (*Sichos Haran 117*) teaches that a person must understand that "only G-d can help us" even in the most ordinary

of circumstances. Nothing comes to a person without Hashem's active bestowal of that good. To help people to enter into every prayer with a sharp awareness of how much rides on the prayer's effectiveness, Rav Nachman offers the following image:

"Imagine that you are in middle of the sea with a storm raging to the very heart of the heavens. You are hanging by a thin thread, and you do not know how to save yourself... The only thing you can do is lift your eyes and heart to Hashem."

Try This!

▶ A baby expresses its every need by uttering a heart-rending cry. If you have ever seen and heard a hungry baby crying for its mother, you have seen the face of pure dependence and need. Imagine that stark sense of dependency – nothing can happen without the mother's help – when you say the words שועם אליו.

Did You Know

▶ **Stand Up and Get Ready**

The *Darhei Moshe* writes that the custom of the *Maharil* was to stand up in preparation for the praying of the *Shemoneh Esrei*. He would do so during the *Shacharis* service when the prayer leader began saying the words תהלות לא-ל עליון (*Mishneh Berurah 95:3*).