

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

עזרת אבותינו

The One and Only Redeemer

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

...With a new song... all of them, in unison gave thanks, acknowledged [Your] sovereignty, and said, Hashem shall reign for all eternity. Rock of Israel... and liberate, as You pledged Judah and Israel... Blessed are You Hashem, Who redeemed Israel.

...שירה חדשה... יחד
כלם הודו והמליכו
ואמרו. ה' ימלך לעולם
ועד. צור ישראל... ופדה
כנאמך יהודה וישראל...
ברוך אתה ה', גאל
ישראל.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The Gemara (Berachos 4b) quotes Rabbi Yochanan, who says,

a person prays *Shemoneh Esrei*, he beseeches Hashem to take care of his needs, likewise placing trust in Him. By mentioning גאל ישראל, we express our certainty that just as Hashem answered our ancestors in Egypt because of their trust, He will answer us as well. Surely, a person who lives with such intense trust in G-d will merit a portion in the World to Come (Rabbeinu Yonah, *Berachos*, 2b, s.v. "aizehu").

This connection is alluded to with the words הודו והמליכו ואמרו. The word הודו refers to offering thanks for the past, המליכו refers to the present, and אמרו refers to the future when we all will proclaim ה' ימלך לעולם ועד "Hashem shall reign for all eternity," with the coming of the final redemption (see *Eitz Yosef*).

"Who is worthy of the World to Come? One who joins the blessing of redemption, גאל ישראל to *Shemoneh Esrei* said during Maariv, the evening prayer." The Gemara concludes that there is no question that this requirement applies in the morning *Shacharis* prayer, since the greatest portion of the redemption from Egypt occurred in the daytime (see *Bamidbar* 33:3). One of the explanations of Rabbi Yochanan's words is that when the Jews were slaves in Egypt, G-d answered their prayers for redemption because they placed their trust in Him. When

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Hashem's ID

Identifying Hashem as the Redeemer of Israel expresses our trust in Hashem's power, which makes our prayers more powerful.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

The One Place to Turn

Identifying Hashem as our Redeemer, as we learned in "Word to the Wise," is the proper prelude to requesting His help for our needs and challenges. After all, we can only reasonably ask for help from the One who has the power to help us. Rashi (Berachos 4b, s.v. "Zeh hasomeich") sees this concept illustrated in Tehillim. Chapter 19 ends with the words "Hashem, my Rock and my Redeemer," and Chapter 20 begins, "May Hashem answer you on the day of distress." This mirrors the manner in which גאל ישראל leads into the *Shemoneh Esrei*

Because we trust in Hashem alone to redeem us from our troubles, prayer is indeed the prescribed manner for a Jew to respond to every challenge in life. *Sefer Ha'Ikrim* (Maamar 4, Chapter 16) comments:

"It is fitting and obligatory for every believer in Hashem's overseeing of [our day-to-day] existence to believe that prayer is effective and

can save him from an evil fate. Someone who does not pray in his hour of need must either be lacking faith that Hashem is watching, or lacking faith that Hashem is all-powerful, and both of these are utter heresy."

Sometimes, however, a person refrains from praying not because he lacks confidence in Hashem's power, but rather, because he lacks confidence in his own worthiness. From a true perspective, however, Hashem is available to every person whether he is worthy or not. As the *Sefer Ha'Ikrim* explains, everything Hashem provides each day is not due to man's righteousness but rather to Hashem's benevolence and compassion.

We need not be perfect, or even close to it, to beseech Hashem in prayer. We simply need to reach for the lifeline He is extending to us, and to grasp it gratefully, confident that at the other end is the One Power who can save us.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Sure Cure

A child has difficulty reading. The parents try everything to help him – reviewing with him at home, hiring tutors, having him tested for learning disabilities – but nothing seems to make a difference. Then, they hear from a friend about a teacher who uses a unique method to help



children read. "It works every time!" the parent proclaims. On further research, the parents discover that indeed, every single child who has been brought to this teacher has become a proficient reader. Immediately, the parents make

an appointment for their child with this teacher.

Imagine their feelings as they bring their child to this appointment. It's not just one more request for help – it's the request that will really work, addressed to the person who can really help. It is that sense of trust that we carry with us when we go from גאל ישראל into the *Shemoneh Esrei*.

Try This!

► Each day, we are commanded to remember the exodus from Egypt. Imagine the scene – hundreds of thousands of men and women, children and the elderly, livestock and beasts of burden loaded with all the possessions we were permitted to take. A mass of humanity, guided by Hashem, walked out of slavery and into freedom. Picture the grandeur of that scene and feel the wonder and excitement of the people that experienced that moment when you say the words גאל ישראל.

Did You Know

► *At the King's Door*

A loyal subject arrives at the palace and knocks on the door of the king, hoping to make a request. The king, who loves this subject, comes down from his throne and goes to greet the visitor. However, when he opens the door, he finds that the visitor is gone. The next time the visitor comes knocking, the king does not respond. *Mishneh Berurah* (Siman 111:8) applies this parable to making an interruption between reciting גאל ישראל, in which one comes close to G-d by recalling the redemption from Egypt, and *Shemoneh Esrei*, where one beseeches G-d for his needs. Therefore, one should not make any interruption, even to respond to *Kaddish* or *Kedushah*, in between גאל ישראל and *Shemoneh Esrei* (Ibid: 3) as that constitutes an interruption.