

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

The Invisible Shield

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem...O King, Helper, Savior, and Shield.

ברוך אתה
ה'... מלך עוזר
ומושיע ומגן

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



מלך, a King - Who remains in His palace providing help from afar

(*Jewish Meditation*, Schocken Books, Aryeh Kaplan, page 117).

the process of arresting a pair of armed muggers who were lurking in the shadows awaiting their next victim.

ומגן, and Shield - Hashem prevents the trouble or misfortune from even approaching the person in the first place:

A pedestrian decides to take the longer "scenic route" through the park to work. He'll never know that a gang of hoodlums had gathered along his usual route (ibid).

According to *Iyun Tefillah*, Hashem is a עוזר in that He helps those who try to help themselves and He is a מושיע as He saves a person even without the person's participation. *Lev Eliyahu* (Volume 1, Page 301) explains that although Hashem uses conventional and natural means when he acts as an עוזר, Helper and מושיע, Savior, when He acts as our מגן, Shield, He utilizes supernatural means to protect us.

עוזר, a Helper - At this level, a person is in the throes of an *existing*, immediate and inescapable danger, and Hashem thwarts the harm or injury (*Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Volume 4, page 65):

A man is accosted by a criminal who waves a gun in his direction and demands his wallet. Suddenly, a police officer on a routine patrol notices the crime in progress and rescues the victim.

מושיע, a Savior - Hashem is a מושיע, in that He pushes aside an impending peril, canceling the danger that is *threatening* a person (ibid):

A young man is innocently walking down the street, when he suddenly notices a commotion in an alleyway as he passes by. The police are in

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

What You Don't See

Hashem acts as the Jewish people's shield, protecting us from dangers we do not even know exist.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Answered Prayers

In "Word to the Wise," *Michtav M'Eliyahu* (Volume 4, page 65) explains that when we are in an obvious position of difficulty, we clearly perceive that Hashem is an עוזר, Helper, or מושיע, Savior. We recognize when Hashem saves us from a potentially perilous situation. Recognizing that no harm has ensued, we are moved to thank Hashem with a heartfelt "Baruch Hashem." However, as a מגן, Hashem shields us completely from the potential harm. We have no knowledge that we have been spared.

The *Bnei Yissaschar* explains the following verses with this important concept in mind: "Praise Hashem, all nations; praise Him, all the states! For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of Hashem is eternal" (*Tehillim*, 117:1-2). Why would the nations praise Hashem for His goodness on our behalf? How do they even know of the favor that Hashem bestows on His people?

The fact is that the nations of the world are, at times, actually more aware than we of Hashem's kindness toward us, because they know of the

plots being planned against us — schemes of which we are completely ignorant. That ignorance stems from Hashem acting as a מגן, a Shield, Who prevents the misfortune of those evil plots from even approaching us.

A report issued in July 2012 related that during the previous year, since May 2011, Israel detected and thwarted more than 20 terror plots against Israelis in locations throughout the world.

Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him sincerely (Tehillim 145:18), assures us that Hashem always responds to sincere prayers. Yet, it is an undeniable fact, played out in Jewish history, as well as in countless personal lives, that sometimes prayer does not bring about the prayed-for salvation. However, we must realize that when something goes successfully, safely and smoothly in life, it is the result of Hashem answering a person's prayers and preventing many set-backs from ever occurring. Thus, when any aspect of life runs smoothly without drama and trauma, we are seeing the answer to our prayers.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

"Today I Wasn't Fired!"

The workers at Acme International are blissfully unaware that a major downsizing is being considered as a means of improving the company's bottom line. The top executives huddle in a conference room secretly deciding the fate of their employees. At the last moment, they decide to sell off one of their overseas divisions



and spare the staff of their home office the dreaded "axe." Little did Shlome Rosenfeld, an Acme employee, know that his fervent prayers for his livelihood in Barech Aleinu (of Shemoneh Esrei) each day brought Hashem to respond by protecting his job. He never

even knew that his job was on the line.

The world abounds with people who are bent toward harming others, nations set on dominating others, microbes programmed to infect us and physical circumstances that can cause poverty, accidents and injury in the blink of an eye. Every day that ends with us being fed and sheltered, safe, healthy and free to serve Hashem, is a tribute to G-d, our Shield.

Try This!

► Imagine an impermeable, invisible bubble of protection settling over you and every member of the Jewish people when you say the word ומגן.

Did You Know

► **Speaking Directly to Hashem**

In last week's "Did You Know," we cited the statement of the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Siman* 98, *Se'if* 1) that when a person recites *Shemoneh Esrei* he should regard it as if the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) is before him.

This *kavannah* is required during the entire *Shemoneh Esrei*. It must reflect a steadfast awareness that one is directly beseeching Hashem. Note, however, that there is disagreement as to whether a lack of this *kavannah* would invalidate the *Shemoneh Esrei*. (*Chiddushei Rebbe Chaim Halevi, Hilchos Tefillah*, Chapter 4.)