

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

Creative Destruction

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

You are eternally mighty, my L-rd, the **Resuscitator of the dead** are You, abundantly able to save. *(Between Shemini Atzeres and Pesach) He makes the wind blow **and the rain descend**.

*(Nusach Sefard) Pesach thru Succos: - מוריד הטל - He makes the dew descend.

אתה גבור לעולם
אד-ני, מחיה
מתים אתה, רב
להושיע. (בחורף)
משיב הרוח
ומוריד הגשם.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The *Kuzari* (*Maamar* 3, *Ose* 17) comments that from this *beracha* called "Gevura," one should implant in his

split second to remind us of who is really boss. On Sunday, Dec. 26, 2004, the tsunami [that struck South East Asia] offered yet another humbling lesson that the power of nature far exceeds the reach - indeed, even the imagination - of man.

The earthquake and subsequent waves released as much energy as 1,000,000 atomic bombs. That energy changed, slightly but perceptibly to modern science, the wobble and rotation of the Earth. It also redistributed Earth's mass, moving the North Pole one inch and causing the length of a day to shrink permanently by three-millionths of a second, according to geophysicist Richard Gross of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. It also prompted prominent scientists to ponder the relationship among mankind, nature and G-d."

heart that Hashem's rule in this world is continuous, contrary to heretic philosophers who maintain that Hashem is not involved in "managing" nature which operates on its own without Hashem's daily involvement. From time to time we are all clearly reminded of Hashem's *gevura*, as the following excerpt points out (adapted from The Miami Herald, January 2, 2005, "NATURE'S POWER, MYSTERY INSPIRE AWE", Author, Seth Borenstein, page 1A):

"Man can dam rivers, build skyscrapers, even go to the moon, but sometimes nature needs only a

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Restored to Life

Hashem's *gevura* – His might – is demonstrated in the miracle of resurrection.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

What's Natural

In this second blessing, we recognize Hashem's might *אתה גבור*, by noting that Hashem resuscitates the dead *מחיה מתים* and *ומוריד הגשם*, He makes the rain descend. Causing the resurrection of the dead and the rain to descend and are both acts of resurrection. One is resurrection of dead people while the other is resurrection of decayed seeds. Nevertheless, they are both resurrection of something dead. Why do we do not consider rain, which brings seeds to sprout, in the same miraculous context as the resurrection of the dead?

One reason is because we are accustomed to rain. Although the miracle of wheat sprouting from a decayed seed is indeed a form of resurrection, it is a normal occurrence. Resurrection of the dead, on the other hand, is something we never see. Therefore, it arouses

our awe. If the situation were reversed, wheat sprouting from the soil would arouse our awe, while resurrection of the dead would appear as a natural occurrence. For in the absence of the sense of newness, habit causes us to lose all reflection and insight and all possibility of an awareness of spirituality (*Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Volume 5, Page 24).

Hashem continuously gives life and meets all our basic needs. If we would stop to consider His wondrous and mighty actions and His *gevura*, immediately we would love, praise, and glorify Him. If not for Hashem's *gevura*, we would be unable to experience this precious gift of life which consists of many miracles performed by Hashem.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Renewal

Imagine throwing a lollipop stick on the ground. It gets covered up with soil. The rain falls and the stick begins to rot away. Then, lo and behold, a tiny new stick sprouts up from the ground and a new lollipop grows around it. Certainly the



press would arrive in droves to photograph this incredible phenomenon. Normally, things that decay crumble and dissolve; they do not take on a new life.

The life force that Hashem put into this world, however, starts with decay. The seed rots in the soil, and from that, new life pushes its way into the world. This is our model of what will happen when, in the times of Moshiach, Hashem's *gevura* will enable those who rest in the ground to push their way into a new existence in a new world.

Try This!

▶ When man destroys something, it's destroyed. When Hashem destroys, it engenders new life. Imagine a time-lapse video of a seed decaying and falling away as a tiny shoot unfolds from within it and pokes through the soil. Think of that bright green, tender shoot when you say *מחיה מתים*.

Did You Know?

▶ **Retrieving Lost Kavannah**

In last week's "Did You Know," we provided several solutions for one who does not fulfill the *kavannah* requirement during the first *berachah* of *Shemoneh Esrei*. Here we present additional alternatives:

- If one had *kavannah* at the end of the first *berachah*, he satisfies the *kavannah* requirement (*Shailos U'Teshuvos Eretz Tzvi, Siman 22*).
- One may wait quietly until *Chazaras Hashatz* and then have in mind to satisfy his requirement to have *kavannah* in the first *berachah* by listening to the *shliach tzibur* recite the *berachah* (*Beur Halachah, Orach Chaim, Siman 101, s.v. "V'Ha'idnah"*; also see *Shailos U'Teshuvos Yabia Omer, Orach Chaim, Volume 3, Siman 9*; and *Shailos U'Teshuvos Az Nidberu, Volume 2, Siman 59*).