

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

United We Stand

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Sound the great shofar for our freedom, raise the banner to gather our exiles and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Israel.

תקע בשופר גדול
לחרותנו, ושא נס לקבץ
גלותינו, וקבענו יחד
מארבע כנפות הארץ.
ברוך אתה ה', מקבץ
נדחי עמו ישראל.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

The term נדחי, the dispersed, is based on the verse (Yeshayah 27:13) והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול ובאו האבדים בארץ אשור, והנחיים בארץ מצרים והשתחוו לה' בהר הקדש בירושלים, "And it will be on that day that great shofar will be blown, and then will come those lost in the land of Assyria and those dispersed in the land of Mitzrayim and they will prostrate

themselves to Hashem on the holy mountain in Jerusalem." Even those who have "lost their way" in their observance of Torah may be gathered in (Sefer Sifsei Chaim—Rinas Chaim, Page 147). The Gemara (Sanhedrin 110b) cites an opinion that based on this verse, the Ten Tribes, who were exiled by the King of Assyria (Rashi, Ibid) will be redeemed and reunited with the Jewish people when the Geulah comes (Eitz Yosef).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Acting as Hashem's Nation

By fulfilling our role as Hashem's nation, learning Torah and striving to sanctify Hashem's name in the world, we take an active role in bringing the Geulah.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

The Power of the Jewish People

We conclude the blessing with the words עמו ישראל, His people Israel, because we, in our capacity as Hashem's nation, have the power to hasten the Geulah. We can do this through our own actions in service of Hashem—our studying Torah, praying, and the performance of mitzvos. As Abarbanel (Yeshuos Meshicho, Part 2, Iyun 1, Ch. 1, p. 39) teaches, Mashiach can arrive in a moment—"achishenah," suddenly, even before the appointed time has come.

A verse in Yeshayah (21:12) states: "Said the watchman, 'Morning is coming, but also night. If you really desire it, repent and come.'" The prophet laments the fact that the Jewish people did not "repent" because they were asleep, causing the Final Redemption not to "come". This verse elucidates our obligation to do our part, to be awake and alive to the active role we must take in hastening the Final Redemption.

The implication is clear: Mashiach can come any day, even before the predetermined date. As Tehillim (95:7) declares: "This day if you will listen to His voice!" Every generation has a special keitz, end time of its own, as Mashiach is alive and present in every generation, albeit concealed. He is ready to be revealed at a moment's notice.

That the Geulah will come — this is G-d's promise; that our generation is indeed capable of bringing the Geulah "achishenah," we believe is true. By revitalizing our devotion to unity with our fellow Jews, honoring Shabbos, tefillah, charity, Torah learning, and teshuvah — we can forge a connection to G-d that will, we hope, enable the Jewish people to greet Mashiach Tzidkeinu in our times.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Seeing the Sights

A traveler set out on the road in a wagon. Fearful of nighttime marauders, he chose to sleep during the day and remain awake at night. He would awaken just as the moon began to rise, and fall asleep with the first glimmer of sun. When he arrived at his destination, he asked the wagon-driver why his route, which was known for its scenic beauty, had been so dark and dismal. The driver answered,



"The scenery was beautiful. The sun shone every day, but you never saw it, because you slept through it all."

Like this traveler, the Dubno Maggid (cited in Ohel Yaakov, Parashas Emor, p. 116) expounds, the Jewish people have many times throughout history "slept through" a potential time of redemption.

Meanwhile, our wakeful attention is lavished on the various fears and threats we perceive around us – our worries about politics, wars, financial security, social status. These are the "marauders" we watch out for in the darkness, while Hashem's radiance and the goodness of His world flash by as we sleep. Only when we learn to train our own eyes to be awake and aware of the lush spiritual "scenery" all around us will we be able to see the Mashiach present in our generation.

Try This!

► As Hashem's nation, we are like a large, sprawling family belonging to one Father. Imagine a family of siblings coming to their father together to ask him for some help or necessity. Imagine how irresistible their plea would be to their father as he sees his children standing together, bound by their brotherly bond. "It's us, your children," they say. "Please help us." In a similar way, our achdus as a nation moves Hashem to help us. Think of this loving bond when you say עמו ישראל.

Did You Know

► **Every Need**

Last week's "Did You Know" discussed ways to insert personal requests in each of the middle blessings. Alternatively, one may insert personal requests: in the blessing of Shema Koleinu (Shomei'a Tefillah) or in Elokai Netzor.

The personal requests added to the blessing of Shomei'a Tefillah may encompass any and all needs (Siman 119, Se'if 1). Here a person may seek help for the future, asking that a healthy person remain healthy, or that his children be guided on the right path in life (Mishnah Berurah, Ibid, 119:1). The Mishnah Berurah (Ibid:4) adds that this is also an appropriate time to confess one's sins. The only limitation is that one should be concise in his requests (Siman 119:2; Mishnah Berurah, Ibid:12).