

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

Heard but Unanswered

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

Hear our voice, Hashem our G-d, pity and be compassionate to us, and accept—with compassion and favor—our prayer, for G-d Who hears prayers and supplications are You. From before Yourself, our King, turn us not away empty-handed, for You hear the prayer of Your people Israel with compassion. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who hears prayer.

שמע קולנו, ה' אלקינו חוס  
ורחם עלינו, וקבל ברחמים  
וברצון את תפלתנו, כי  
א-ל שומע תפלות  
ותחנונים אתה,  
ומלפניך מלכנו, ריקם אל  
תשיבנו, כי אתה שומע  
תפלת עמך ישראל ברחמים.  
ברוך אתה ה', שומע תפלה.

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the word



We begin this blessing with the phrase שמע קולנו – Hashem, Hear our voice.

that would render our prayers worthy of His attention (*Sefer Sifsei Chaim—Rinas Chaim, Page 211*).

*Sefer Dover Shalom* (cited in *ibid.*) explains that the phrasing of this blessing asks Hashem to hear our קול—our groans and cries—even if they are inarticulate. Finally, the *Eitz Yosef* writes (cited in *ibid.*) writes that with the word קולנו, we plead for Hashem to accept our words of prayer with all their deep meanings, even though we recite the words without full awareness.

The *Anshei K'neses Ha'Gedolah*, Men of the Great Assembly, especially chose the words שמע קולנו, hear our voice and not *Shema Tefilaseinu*, hear our *tefillos*. In this way, we are asking Hashem to hear our prayer on the basis of our קול—our voice alone—even though we may lack the merit or the complete *kavannah*

**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

*Giving It More*

Although Hashem hears all prayers, sometimes He withholds salvation to spur us onto heightened levels of prayer and connection to Him.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

*Urging Us On*

This blessing makes the statement כי א-ל שומע תפלות ותחנונים אתה, that Hashem is a G-d Who hears prayers and supplications. Yet, our history and our personal lives testify to the fact that the salvation for which we plead does not always arrive.

But did our Patriarchs and Matriarchs require arousal? Rav Dessler teaches that their desperate predicament spurred their already heartfelt prayers onto a new intensity level of *kavannah*. This demonstrates the enormous value, in the eyes of Hashem, of each measure of additional *kavannah* in prayer.

To resolve this perceived difficulty, we must turn to the Gemara (*Yevamos 64a*) that says: “Why were our Patriarchs infertile? Because Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous.” As Rav Dessler explains (*Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 5, page 67*), our Patriarchs and Matriarchs benefited from their intense suffering, since it caused them to reach deeply into their souls and cry out to Hashem that He bless them with children.

Had our Forefathers not felt this void in their lives, they may have prayed with what they believed to be their full capacity, yet in reality, their full capacity may have remained untapped. Likewise, we may believe that we are praying with every ounce of *kavannah* we can find within ourselves, yet Hashem sees far more in us than we can perceive. Embedded within the troubles Hashem sends us may be Hashem’s loving call, urging us to uncover the powerful emotions and *kavannah* in the deeper recesses of our hearts.

Similarly, Rav Tzadok HaKohen (*Rseesai Lailah, Os 11*) explains:

“All pain and suffering which Hashem dispatches our way, Heaven forbid, is to awaken, arouse and alert us to pray properly.”

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

*Digging Deeper*

One who prays can be compared to a person digging a ditch. The deeper he digs, the more the pit can hold. “Digging” deep into our souls to create a better *tefillah* increases our capacity to draw close to Hashem and to merit His abundant blessings (*Sheurim B'Tefillah, page 140*).



Misfortune and difficulty — whether related to health, finances, children, family or even spiritual issues — are a part of every life. When these troubles serve as the spark that ignites our passion and sincerity in *prayer*, then we

transform those troubles into “the beginning of our salvation.”

It is vital for one to never fall under the destructive misconception that Hashem is ignoring or deaf to one’s heartfelt pleas. Although Divine wisdom is beyond man’s capacity to perceive, Divine love can never be placed in doubt.

**Try This!**

▶ The children of a family make many requests and demands of their parents. While they are young and dependent, their parents are the address for literally every need they have. If Mommy or Daddy says “no,” there is no other address to which they can turn for relief. Gradually, they come to understand that “no” might mean “now is not the time,” or “that will not be good for you.” Yet they know that their parents are the only arbiters and sources of what they need. Likewise, Hashem is the only address for our *tefillos*. No matter how frustrated we may become over a seemingly intractable challenge, there is nowhere else to turn for relief. We are speaking to the only One who can help, and He, like a loving parent, is always listening and receiving our prayers. Think of yourself as a child coming to your parent for help when you say כי א-ל שומע תפלות ותחנונים אתה.

**Did You Know**

▶ *Exercising Faith*

In last week’s “Did You Know,” we explained that the words that express our hopes for the *geulah* are in the blessing את צמח דוד when we say כי לישועתך קוינו כל היום for we hope for Your salvation all the day.

Is *tzipisa l'Yeshuah* actually counted as a mitzvah? According to the *Sma”k*, (*Sefer Mitzvos Ktana, Mitzvos Asai 1*) the mitzvah to hope and wait for the final redemption is included in the first mitzvah (in the *Aseres Ha'Dibros*) to have faith in Hashem: “I am your G-d Who redeemed you from Egypt...” Says the *Sma”k*: Hashem says, “Just as I want you to believe that I redeemed you from Egypt, so do I want you to believe that I am your G-d and that I will gather the Jews dispersed among the nations of the world, rebuild the *Bais Hamikdash* and bring the final redemption.” Thus, each moment that a person hopes and waits for the final redemption, he performs the mitzvah of *emunah*, faith in Hashem.