

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

The Gift of Pure Kindness

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

We gratefully thank You... for Your miracles that are with us every day; and for Your wonders and favors in every season—evening, morning and afternoon. The Beneficent One, for Your compassions were never exhausted, and the Compassionate One, for Your kindnesses never ended—we have always put our hope in You.

מודים אנחנו לך... ועל נסידך שבכל יום עמנו, ועל נפלאותיך וטובותיך שבכל עת, ערב ובקר וצהרים. הטוב כי לא כלו רחמיך, והמרחם כי לא תמו חסדיך, מעולם קוינו לך.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

In *Modim*, we thank Hashem for נסידך, Your miracles, and for נפלאותיך, Your wonders. What is the difference between the two?

of sunlight to warm the world; all are miracles. It is no coincidence that the *gematria*, (numerical equivalence) of *Elokim*—86—is the same as that of *hateva*, nature (*Sefer Pri Tzadik*, on Chanukah, *Ose* 14, page 82). It all comes from G-d.

Because Hashem's wonders are all around us every day, we have constant access to a great source of spiritual inspiration. We need only focus for a moment on the amazing complexity and precision of just one gift we enjoy in order to experience wonder and gratitude for Hashem's kindness. The more often we engage in these moments of recognition, the more we feel ourselves as the fortunate recipients of Hashem's love and care. (Adapted from "My Father My King" (ArtScroll) by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin).

נסידך are occurrences whose miraculous nature is obvious to us, whereas נפלאותיך are G-d's "hidden miracles" in which we do not see G-d's involvement. (*Malbim*, *Tehillim*, 9:2; *Eitz Yosef*).

All of nature is, in reality, the work of Hashem, who performs many "hidden miracles" daily, giving us the capability to breathe, see, hear, walk, talk, use our hands to create and accomplish, and much more. In addition, He equips the world with food for every creature, a perfect atmosphere for breathing and the precise level

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

It's All Compassion

Hashem provides constant kindness and compassion to us.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Constant Goodness

In this segment we say הטוב כי לא כלו רחמיך, והמרחם, כי לא תמו חסדיך, there is no end to G-d's compassion and G-d extends Himself to us in limitless ways. The Mishnah (*Berachos* 54a) states, "A person must bless Hashem for the bad just as (*ke'sheim*) he blesses Him for the good." What does *ke'sheim*, just as, mean?

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah*, 3b) explains that after the resurrection of the dead, Hashem will take the sun out of its casing and allow it to blaze into the world at full strength. The wicked will be judged by its force while the righteous will be healed by it. The *Maharsha* (*ibid*) explains that the sun shines evenly, yet the reaction to its intense heat varies according to the recipient. The same sun which bleaches flax and turns it white can turn skin dark.

There are two types of goodness. There is the goodness that we can all easily comprehend, such as good health or wealth, and the goodness that we faithfully accept from Hashem, even though it is painful, such as illness or disappointment. Sorrowful situations are a test of our faith, and we have to internalize this truth so firmly that we can recite the blessing for the difficult times with the same enthusiasm (*ke'sheim*) we apply to the blessing for good times. (With Hearts Full Of Faith, (Rabbi Mattisyahu Saloman, ArtScroll, page 46).

Our challenge is to remember that everything that happens to us—pleasant or unpleasant, easy or difficult—comes from the same Source, like the heat from the sun. We are challenged to have faith and confidence that everything is good and that the difference is in the recipient, not in the Source (*Klai Yakar, Raih*, 11; 26).

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Room Service

Reuven booked a room in Hotel Hefker for his business trip. He found the service to be absolutely terrible. Everything a guest might need had to be ordered specially and paid for. If he wanted fresh air to breathe in his room, he had to make sure each morning to order his 24 hours of ventilation. If he wanted a clean room, he had to pay each day for maid service. If he wanted to lie



down in a bed at night, he had to order the bed anew for each night of his stay. On his next trip, he booked a room at Hotel Ha'Olam. There, every amenity was laid out before him for his pleasure and enjoyment. With fresh air, a comfortable bed, delicious food and clean, pleasant surroundings all provided, he was able to spend his time tending to business.

Had he never stayed at Hotel Hefker, however, he would never have realized what kind and gracious service Hotel Ha'Olam provided.

Hashem accommodates our every need. He sets the world out for us like a gracious host, seeing to our comfort, and our health, decorating our "room" with stunning sunsets, majestic mountains and millions of small tableaus of quiet beauty. When we think about it, we are really pampered guests in His beautiful world.

Try This!

Think of a few moments in your life in which you were truly overwhelmed with gratitude. It could be a time when you achieved a success for which you had worked hard, or some milestone event like a marriage or the birth of a child, or perhaps the positive outcome of a difficult illness or crisis. Think of how your heart swelled with happiness, how you felt Hashem's benevolence shining directly upon you, and capture that feeling when you say the words הטוב כי לא כלו רחמיך, והמרחם, כי לא תמו חסדיך.

Did You Know

Too Great To Bear

One of the most serious impacts of talking during prayer arises from conversing during the *chazan's* repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, known as *chazaras hashatz*. During this segment of prayer, talking is strictly forbidden. The Shulchan Aruch (*Siman* 124:4) rules:

"When the *Shliach Tzibur* repeats *Shemoneh Esrei*, the congregants are required to be silent and apply their minds to the blessings made by the *chazzan* and respond *amen* to them."

Speaking during *chazaras hashatz* is condemned by the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Siman* 124:7) using the harshest language seen in any discussion of transgression.

"One should refrain from speaking profane words during the time the *chazan* repeats *Shemoneh Esrei*. And if one spoke, it is a sin, and the sin is too great to bear."