

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

The Value of Unity

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Establish peace, goodness, blessing, graciousness, kindness, and compassion upon us and upon all of Your people Israel. Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance...

שים שלום, טובה,
וברכה, חן, וחסד
ורחמים, עלינו ועל כל
ישראל עמך. ברכנו
אבינו, כלנו כאחד
באור פניך...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

This nineteenth and final blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei* corresponds to the *Bircas Kohanim*, the blessings of the *Kohanim* recited by the *Shliach Tzibbur* before this last blessing: *יברכך ה' וישמרך*, May Hashem bless you and guard you; *ויחנך*, May Hashem make His face shed light upon you and be gracious unto you; and *ישא ה' פניו* וישם לך שלום, May Hashem lift up His face unto you and give you peace (*Bamidbar 6:24-26*).

us and all of *Klal Yisroel*, the word *שים* is used because it implies not only that the blessings should come to us, but that they should remain with us. (Adapted from *Sefer Boruch She'Amar*).

But what is the key to enable the blessings that we request in this *berachah* to remain with the Jewish people? Peace is the key; as Chazal (*Uktzin 3:12; Jerusalem Talmud, Berachos 2:4*) tell us, Hashem did not find any "container" as effective as peace for the purpose of holding the Jewish nation's blessings intact. For the other blessings (i.e. intrinsic goodness, blessing, graciousness, loving kindness, and compassion to the Jewish nation) to remain in place, we first must have peace (*Iyun Tefillah on Sim Shalom*).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

To Hold Our Blessings

Hashem's blessings "stick" with the Jewish people when we are as one, living in unity and harmony.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Worthy of the Temple

The *Gemara (Yoma 9a)* tells us that the Second *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed because of baseless hatred, which teaches us that such behavior is comparable to the three cardinal sins: immorality, idolatry and murder. The *Maharal (Netzach Yisroel)* clarifies that they are really not comparable. However, if one understands upon what merit the Second *Bais Hamikdash* was allowed to stand, one can understand how baseless hatred was able to destroy it.

Hashem allowed the second *Bais Hamikdash* to stand because it unified the Jewish nation around one *kohain* and one *mizbeich*. However, once the people indulged in baseless hatred, they became a divided nation, no longer worthy of the Temple. Unity forms the vessel

within which G-d can channel His blessings to His people. When we are not unified, we are not capable of absorbing the blessing that flows from Hashem. Therefore, we must strive for harmony.

The Rambam (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Matnas Ani'im, 10:2*) describes the unity required of the Jewish people in his discussion of the commandment to give charity, "All of Israel are like brothers, as it is written, 'You are children of G-d your L-rd,' and if a brother does not take pity on his brother, who then shall take pity on him? To whom should the Jewish poor look to for help? They have no one to look to for help but their brothers." (Adapted from *With Hearts Full Of Faith*, Rabbi Mattisyahu Saloman, *ArtScroll*, page 79)

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

When There's No Peace

Levi was a strong, healthy young man. He should have been able to jump out of bed each morning with vigor, concentrate on his prayers, eat with a healthy appetite and be focused and productive at his job. Instead, Levi was exhausted, distracted and miserable, for he and his wife were embroiled in a bitter dispute that was leading quickly toward divorce. The blessing of good health did him little good as long as his heart was in turmoil.



Shimon was one of the wealthiest men in his community. He had everything other people dreamed of – a beautiful home, an apartment in *Yerushalayim*, a luxurious car and a full household staff. He should have been living a worry-free life. But instead, he was in a constant state of anxiety, waiting to see what his former partner would

do next to interfere with his business. Stealing customers, spreading rumors, giving away proprietary information – the assault never stopped.

Both Levi and Shimon had tremendous gifts from Hashem, but they could not hold onto those gifts because their lives were wracked by conflict. No achievement or possession can bring happiness to a soul that is in turmoil. Peace is indeed the "vessel" that receives Hashem's blessings.

Try This!

Imagine the entire Jewish nation standing at the foot of Mount Sinai. Every Jewish man, woman and child was there; their hearts and minds were completely saturated with Hashem's presence and melded together as one entity. Think of how wonderful it would feel to be part of this mass of humanity when you say the words *כלנו כאחד*.

Did You Know

In Place of the Kohen

The *Jerusalem Talmud (Berachos, 4:4)* equates the *Shliach Tzibbur* who repeats the *tefillah* to the *Kohen* who brought the offerings in the Holy Temple. Since *tefillah* takes the place of the *karban*, offerings brought in the Holy Temple, one is in effect beseeching the *Shliach Tzibbur* to act on his behalf, just as one would say to the *Kohen*: "Please bring my offering for me!" (See *Aderes Eliyahu on Ibid*)

When one interferes with the recitation of *chazaras hashatz*, one interferes with the ability of the congregation to have its prayers answered. *Arizal* explains that *chazaras hashatz* has a greater status than the silent *Shemoneh Esrei* because it fulfills the directive of the *Gemara (Berachos 32b)* that "If one sees that his prayers are not answered, he should repeat the *tefillah*." According to the *Vilna Gaon*, this refers to *chazaras hashatz (See Kaf HaChaim, Orach Chaim, Siman 124, Se'if Katan 2 who cites the Arizal)*.