

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

To Love Doing Acts of Kindness

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Establish peace... for with the light of Your countenance You gave us, Hashem, our G-d, the Torah of life and a love of kindness, righteousness, blessing, compassion, life and peace... Blessed are You, Hashem, Who blesses His people Israel with peace.

שים שלום... כי באור פניך נתת לנו, ה' אלקינו, תורת חיים ואהבת חסד, וצדקה, וברכה, ורחמים, וחיים, ושלום... ברוך אתה ה', המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

What is the significance of the fact that כי באור פניך נתת לנו... תורת light of Your countenance You gave us ... the Torah? The light of Hashem's countenance is a very special level of *d'veikus* to Him, and we have the merit to experience this light only when we are bound together and united as we were when we received the Torah. We received Hashem's *He'aras Panim*, the light of His countenance, when we stood

together at Mount Sinai, as the verse in Shemos (19:2) states: *Va'yichan sham Yisrael neged ha'har*, Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain. The verb—*va'yichan*—is written in the singular. This is to teach that this huge mass of humanity comprised of millions of individuals encamped together with a unity of spirit, making them like a single person (Rashi). Only when Israel was united in its goal of hearing the word of G-d could it be given the Torah and receive the light of Hashem's countenance. (*Sifsei Chaim, Rimas Chaim, Page 295*)

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Nurturing Peace

Because the pursuit of kindness toward others builds love toward others, this blessing, which asks for peace, asks that we should love doing kindness as well.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Loving to Give

In the blessing שים שלום, establish peace, we request that Hashem bless us with a “love of kindness”—the unconditional desire to do kindness to others, because it helps to build peace among mankind.

In his famous “Discourse” on loving-kindness, Rav Dessler (*Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 1, Page 36*) explores the connection between love and giving. Do we give to others because we love them, or is it perhaps the reverse—that we love them because we give?

The usual assumption is that love causes giving, for we observe that people shower gifts and favors on those they love. There is, however, a strong argument for the opposite perspective: A person loves what he himself has created or nurtured (*Bava Metzia 38a*). Whether it is a child

he has brought into the world, an animal he has reared, a plant he has tended, an object he has crafted or a house he has built—a person is bound in love to the work of his hands, for in it, he finds himself.

The tractate *Derech Eretz Zutah* (Chapter 2) states, “If you want to nurture the love of your friend, make it your concern to seek his welfare.” Love flows in the direction of giving.

That which a person gives to another is never lost, says Rav Dessler. It becomes an extension of his own being, as if he has transferred a part of himself in the person to whom he has given. In effect, he has transferred a part of himself to the recipient, which naturally draws them together. This is the attachment between one person and another to which we give the name “love.”

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

The Bond of Kindness

Rav Dessler (*Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 1, Page 36*) describes a case that he personally observed.

“I knew a young couple whose little son was the delight of their lives. War overtook their town and they were forced to flee. It so happened that the young mother was away from home on that day; the father fled with his little boy in one direction while the mother was forced to take the opposite route, and so the family was separated. At last the battlefronts grew quiet,



peace returned, and they were re-united—and what a happy family union that was.

But a remarkable thing came to light. The love between the father and his son was deeper than that of the mother for the son. The cruel fact was that the potential “giving” of all those years was lost beyond recall. It was the father who had reared the child and had lavished on him the thousand-

and-one acts of tender care which normally fall to the mother. The love which springs from all that giving had passed completely to the father.

This phenomenon, says Rav Pam (Rav Pam on Chumash, Rabbi Sholom Smith, ArtScroll, Page 94), explains why parents' attachment to their children is stronger than children's attachment to their parents, even though the children are the decades-long recipients of their parents' countless kindnesses. It is the giver's love which strengthens through their giving.

Try This!

▶ A person who does good feels good. Filling one's life with positive interactions – loving-kindness toward others (i.e. helping others, praying for others, dealing patiently with annoyance or aggression, cheering someone up, giving encouragement and praise), transforms one's personality. The next time you experience the good feeling of giving to someone, record the feeling in your mind and recall it when you say the words ואהבת חסד.

Did You Know

▶ *A Proper Farewell*

אלקי נצור. After completing the שים שלום blessing, one should recite אלקי נצור. Before reciting the verse עשה שלום במרומי at the conclusion of שים שלום, one steps backwards three steps and bows, like a servant who departs from his master. Before one rises from the bowed position, he should turn his face to his left side while he says the words עשה שלום במרומי... (Siman 123:1). One should not recite עשה שלום במרומי while walking back; rather, he should wait until he has finished the three steps (*Mishneh Berurah, ibid:3*).