Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

Help from Above

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

May the expressions of my mouth. ...

My G-d, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully. To those who curse me, let my soul be silent and let my soul be like dust to everyone...As for all those who oppose and who design evil against me, speedily nullify their counsel and disrupt their design...

יהיו לרצון אמרי פַי ... אלקי, נצור לשוני מדע, ושפתי מדבר מרמה. ולמקללי נפשי תדם, ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה... וכל החושבים עלי רעה, מהרה הפר עצתם וקלקל מחשבתם...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

Gemara Basra 165a) teaches, "Everybody violates avak lashon hara, the 'dust' of lashon hara," which is lashon

hara in its most subtle form. Because the temptation to fall into this transgression is so strong, a special prayer for the avoidance of lashon hara, נצור לשוני מרע, is added. But why is a prayer to avoid מרמה, speaking deceitfully, included? Ray Schwab (Ray Schwab on Prayer, Artscroll,

Page 536) explains that avoidance of lashon hara can lead to מרמה, speaking deceitfully when, in an effort to conceal the details of something derogatory that was said about another, a person might fabricate something and tell an untruth—a מרמה. Therefore, we beseech Hashem with a prayer to help us avoid circumstances where we might be tempted to be deceitful and tell an untruth, no matter how righteous the purpose.

THEME: An essential concept of the prayer

Extra Help From Heaven

Avoiding loshon hora, with its complex inner workings, requires its own prayer for Divine Assistance.

INSIGHT: Deeper meanings of the theme

The Anatomy of Loshon Hora

In "Word to the Wise," we explained that a special prayer for the avoidance of *lashon* hara is added because the temptation to violate it is very strong. Why is lashon hara so hard to control? In reality, speaking lashon hara appears to be an almost ludicrous pursuit. A person is usually attracted to sin by some benefit that makes the indiscretion seem worthwhile, at least for that moment. Lashon hara, on the other hand, offers no personal benefits. It has no sensual appeal, and confers neither financial gain nor honor upon the person who indulges in it. Given these facts, speaking lashon hara appears to be an almost foolish quest.

another will eventually commit slander and warns that "by transgressing the prohibition of 'hating his brother, one will come to transgress the sin of lashon hara." That still leaves a question: what

Rashi (Devarim 22:14) declares that a man who hates

(Shaarei Kedushah, Part 2, Shaar 4) "Jealousy causes one to come to hatred". Jealousy arouses vengeance because the jealous person allows himself to illogically believe that the other person's gain is to blame for his deprivation. Rav Mattisyahu Salomon (Matnas Chaim, Maamarim, Vol. 1, p. 231) explains that a jealous person is not simply longing for the object of his desires. Rather, he wants vengeance against the one who does possess that object. This sentiment can be seen among young children who fight over a toy; the winner loses interest in the toy soon after taking possession. Despite jealousy's long reign over the human

causes the hatred? In the words of Ray Chaim Vital

uproot it from within us. In doing so, we deprive hatred of its fuel, which in turn destroys the impetus for *lashon hara*. At that point, the path is paved for Geulah.

heart, there are ways to weaken and, ultimately,

VISUALIZE:

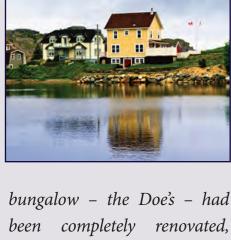
The Better Bungalow

Images that bring the prayer to life

or the thirty years of its existence, Summer Dream

bungalow colony had been known for its down-to-earth, warm and friendly clientele. "The families here are the salt of the earth," contented residents would say, The bungalows were modest, relatively unchanged from

their original construction. Then one summer, the longtime Summer Dream residents arrived to find that one

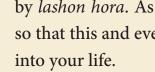


Large windows and ceilings replaced the country cottage structure. The kitchen was nearly industrial sized. Now the residents looked at their formerly "cute" bungalows and saw "shabby." The residents began talking: "The Doe's are show-offs." "Mrs. Doe has

tax cheat." And so on. Human nature is such that

expensive taste." "Mr. Doe is a

once we see something better than what we have, we want it. That is why potato chip companies come up with new flavors, and detergent manufacturers come up with new scents. Because this response is so inbred and hard to detect, the Shemoneh Esrei asks Hashem to help us in avoiding the jealousy and loshon hora it produces, thus protecting the holiness of our tongues, our prayers and our lives.



by lashon hora. As you say אלקי, נצור לשוני מרע think of it as insurance for your prayers, so that this and every Shemoneh Esraei will retain its power to bring Hashem's blessings

You have just finished Shemoneh Esrei. Yet the prayers you have

recited and the requests you have sent toward Heaven can easily plummet back to earth if the mouth that sent them forth is tainted

Did You Know

No Interruptions, Please

A person should not interrupt his recital of Shemoneh Esrei to respond to Kaddish or Kedushah if he is up to the verse יהיו לרצון אמרי said before reciting ...אלקי, נצור לשוני מרע... because the verse יהיו לרצון

אמרי פי is considered part of Shemoneh Esrei proper. (Siman 122:1) On the other hand, if he is already reciting the prayer ...אלקי, נצור, he may interrupt only for the following: Borchu, the "amen" said after hearing the שומע תפלה and הקל הקדוש blessings of Shemoneh Esrei, and "amen" said after דאמירן בעלמא and the words יהא שמה רבא in Kaddish. In Kedushah, he may recite the two verses—קדוש, קדוש, קדוש,

מודים ברוך כבוד... He may also say the words 'מודים אנחנו לך' of מודים ברבנן. (Siman 122:1)

Praying With Passion is a free weekly e-mail newsletter by the author of Praying With Fire (Vols 1 & 2), Yearning With Fire and The Power of Teshuvah.

V'Ani Tefillah Foundation, 1616 E. 29th St., Brooklyn, NY 11229 | 201-837-0354 | info@prayingwithfire.org