

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

BIRCHAS HASHACHAR

She'lo Osani Goy

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, **for not having made me a gentile.**

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך
העולם שלא עשני גוי

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



The word גוי according to the Sages is definitely used to convey the meaning "non-Jew". Although we do find in the Torah the Jewish people being called גוי as in גוי קדוש (Shemos 19:6), nevertheless, our blessings utilize the lashon kodesh used by the 'Men of the Great Assembly', known as the 'language of the Sages'. In the language of the Sages, a member of the non-Jewish world is simply called גוי. (Rav Schwab On Prayer, Page 30)

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Opportunity Of A Mitzvah

This blessing thanks Hashem for giving a Jew the opportunity to **perform far many more mitzvos** than gentile nations are obligated to perform, thus giving a Jew a **far greater role in sanctifying G-d's name** in the world.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Doing It For Hashem

The term *kiddush Hashem* – sanctifying G-d's name - is most often used to describe grand, heroic deeds, such as choosing death rather than forsaking Torah. However, the term also applies to any action that reveals G-d in the world.

Rambam explains that every move we make in this world can include the dimension of *kiddush Hashem* or *chillul Hashem*: "Anyone who rebelliously transgresses any mitzvah in the Torah – this is a *chillul Hashem* Likewise, anyone who stays away from a transgression or performs a mitzvah, not for any reason other than for Hashem.... This is a *kiddush Hashem*."

The Slonimer Rebbe explains that the Rambam is teaching us a foundation of Judaism. **When a Jew does Hashem's will**, aside from the actual fulfillment of the mitzvah, **he is also**

accomplishing a kiddush Hashem. It is his motivation – to become an instrument of Hashem's will – that brings his act into this realm. For example, it is Hashem's will that one does *not* endanger one's life to fast on Yom Kippur. Therefore, the person who must eat on Yom Kippur is actually gaining the mitzvah of *kiddush Hashem* as he puts the food into his mouth.

A Jew, by virtue of his obligation to perform the mitzvos, has the unique opportunity to turn every word and deed of his life into a sanctification of G-d's name. While any person of any nation can live a good and righteous life, only the Jewish people have been entrusted with this crucial role, through which they can bring the world into readiness for the final redemption.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Life Without Mitzvos

Leaving shul on the first day of Sukkos, Avraham walked down the avenue toward his home. His two small sons walked alongside him. One held Avraham's lulav and the other held his esrog. Avraham's wife walked ahead, strolling hand in hand with her nine-year-old daughter, discussing the preparations they would make for their meal in the sukkah.

As the family walked down the busy avenue on that Monday morning, a wave of



people emerged from a nearby subway station. They were holding their shopping bags or briefcases, dressed in business clothes or jeans and t-shirts, heading to a vast variety of workaday destinations.

"It's Monday!" Avraham realized with surprise. Suddenly, he felt extra-blessed; while the rest of the world struggled through another day

of mundane enterprises, the Jewish people occupied their own little spiritual island. For them, it wasn't Monday; it was Day One, Sukkos – a day filled with mitzvos, rejoicing and holiness. "What a gift!" Avraham thought.

Sometimes the best way to appreciate the gift of mitzvos is to imagine life without them. When Avraham saw the subway riders, he realized that if not for the Torah and mitzvos, this glorious Sukkos day would be, for him too, just another day.

TAKE IT WITH YOU:

Your personal connection to the prayer

The Key To A Meaningful Life

Sometimes, as a child, a person has a somewhat ambivalent feeling about the mitzvos a Jew is required to perform. The child may think longingly of his crayons or computer games on Shabbos afternoon, or struggled to wake up for *minyán* as a bar mitzvah boy. But as a person matures, he sees that these obligations are not obstacles that block his happiness, but rather, they are doors that open onto a life of something far greater than satisfying one's momentary desires.

Even the gentile world knows that restraint, self-discipline and idealism are the road to greatness, yet the world all around them pulls them in the opposite direction. "*She'lo osani goy*," thanks Hashem because He has not left us to struggle on our own to pave the road to a G-dly life. The Torah and mitzvos pave the way for us, steering us away from the pitfalls of secular culture and speeding us toward the fulfillment of our purpose as G-d's emissaries.

Try This!

Imagine if every mitzvah you do would draw a visible spark of light from Heaven down to earth. As a Jew, you would be bringing down hundreds of these sparks each day, so that all around every Jew, there would be an aura of wondrous light. This week, think of this image when you say the blessing "*she'lo osani goy*."

Did You Know

The proper time to recite *Birchos HaShachar* is in the morning before Shacharis. Nevertheless, one who prayed Shacharis and did not recite *Birchos HaShachar* may still recite them afterwards. Preferably, he should do so before Chatzos, midday. In the event that he did not, he may still do so until the end of the day (some say even at night until he goes to sleep). (Rama, Siman 52; Mishneh Berurah, Ibid, Se'if Katan 10; Beur Halacha, Ibid, s.v. 'kol ha'brachos'. Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim, Volume 5, Siman 20, Os 12).