

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

עלינו

Recognizing the Master

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

It is our duty to praise the Master of all [L-rd], to ascribe greatness to the Molder of primeval creation, for He has not made us like the nations of the lands and has not emplaced us like the families of the earth; for he has not assigned our portion like theirs nor our lot like all the multitudes...

עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל,  
לתת גדלה ליוצר בראשית,  
שלא עשו כגוי הארצות,  
ולא שמנו כמשפחות האדמה.  
שלא שם חלקנו בהם, וגודלנו  
ככל המונים...

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the word

Most of us are familiar with the Names of G-d, as "Hashem" and "Elokim," since they are used so frequently. However, what about אדון [L-rd]? The Gemara (Berachos 7b) tells us that from the day that Hakadosh Boruch Hu created the world, there was no one who called Him, אדן, L-rd, until Avraham (Bereishis 15:8). Avraham called G-d אדן because he was the first one to openly relate to G-d as the Master of the Universe, as the One Who can intervene in

the workings of this world. The people of that time worshipped the stars as the masters of a person's fate. Avraham taught them that G-d can override anything at any time, including the "natural laws" that exist in this world.

Maharsha (Berachos 7b) explains that Avraham created the Name אדוני, my L-rd. Before this time, those who recognized G-d referred to Him with the Name "Yud", "Hei", "Vav" and "Hei", which implies His existence. אדוני refers to G-d's involvement in every aspect of our lives (Adapted from Schottenstein Edition, Berachos, 7b, Note 1).

**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

Constant Involvement

Calling Hashem אדון, signifies our recognition of Hashem as the true cause of everything that happens in our lives and in the world.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

The Creator and Supervisor

In discussing *emunah*, the Rambam (Hilchos Yisodei HaTorah 1:1) states, "The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being Who brought all existence into being. All the beings of the heavens, the earth, and what is between them came into existence only from the truth of His being"

Beyond belief in Hashem as the sole Creator, *emunah* requires recognition of Hashem's role in every occurrence, from grand historical events to seemingly insignificant personal incidents. This is the concept of *Hashgacha Pratis* — that Hashem supervises His creation moment to moment, and that nothing happens unless He wills it (Ramban, Rabbeinu Bachya, Bereishis 18:19; Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim 3:17-18).

As Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein explains: "Just as Hashem alone created the world so too He alone runs the world. And whoever does not believe this — ...since *emunah* and *Hashgachah*

are one... — is not considered to be a believer in God" (Orchos Rabbeinu LeHaRosh, Piskah 25, cited in Ohr Yechezkel, Emunah p. 105).

Despite the centrality of this belief in Hashem's constant supervision of His creation, it can be a difficult concept to grasp. The world seems to run on a system of cause and effect, conditioning people to interpret the events as the results of human actions or nature. The true Power behind those human actions and nature becomes shrouded, unless one purposefully works at uncovering it.

This understanding that nothing in Creation can exist independent of Hashem, is expressed and is strengthened every time we pray. By coming to Hashem for our needs, we continually weed out the subtly invasive belief in cause and effect, reinforcing in our hearts that there is no "cause" but Hashem's Will (Ohr Yechezkel, Emunah p. 64).

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

The King's Chief of Staff

It was the most prestigious, important job the man could imagine. As the king's Chief of Staff, he would reside inside the royal palace. His clothing, furniture, food, and his daily surroundings would be of regal quality, and all provided by the king. In exchange, of course, he had a vital job to perform each day. He had to take the resources and personnel that the king had put at his disposal and employ them to fulfill the



purposes of the king. He had to submit his own will to the king's, and make sure that he used the resources that the king provided to accomplish that which the king wanted to accomplish.

Like the Chief of Staff, each Jew comes into the world to serve the King. As the Creator, He provides everything for us, inviting us to live in close

proximity to Him and enjoy the bounty of His Creation. Furthermore, he sets up our world and engineers our interactions and experiences to enable us to serve Him and execute His will in the world. We can use what He gives us to serve Him, or we can blind ourselves to Hashem's role in our lives and use what He gives us for our own, ultimately futile purposes. By recognizing the "Master," we ensure that our life and everything that happens within it is filled with purpose and meaning.

**Try This!**

▶ Living in a modern democracy, we have no concept of the relationship of master and servant. The complete dependence of a servant on his master for everything he needs to live – food, shelter, clothing, medical care, money, work, rest – is difficult to imagine. The complete control of the master over his servant is equally difficult to envision. However, to understand this aspect of our multi-faceted relationship with Hashem, it is necessary to try to feel what a servant feels. Imagine that you are standing before a king and you have absolutely nothing but the clothes on your back. It is up to the king to give you each item you need, piece by piece, day by day. And your role, in turn, is to humbly do whatever the king asks of you. Think of that concept when you say the words עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל.

**Did You Know**

▶ **Join the Congregation**

When the congregation is saying the prayer עלינו, one should also read it together with them (Mishneh Berurah 65:9).