



Praying WITH Passion

GIVING MORE MEANING TO OUR TEFILLAH - ONE WEEK AT A TIME ISSUE NO. 169

Tefillah Focus Of The Week: עלינו Knowing the One and Only

...הוא אלקינו, אין עוד. אמת מלכנו, אפס זולתו, ככתוב בתורתו: וידעת היום והשבת אל לבבך, כי ה' הוא האלקים בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת, אין עוד.

Meaning:

The simple translation of the prayer

...He is our G-d and there is none other. True is our King, there is nothing beside Him, as it is written in His Torah: 'You are to know this day and take to your heart that Hashem is the only G-d—in heaven above and on the earth below—there is none other.'

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

To Really Know

Acting consistently in accordance with Hashem's Will is only possible when a person not only knows intellectually, but also feels in his heart that Hashem alone runs the world.

Insight:

Deeper meanings of the theme

From Head to Heart

The Gemara (Berachos 28b) relates that when Rav Yochanan Ben Zakkai became ill, his students came to visit him. They said to him: "Our teacher, bless us." He responded, "May it be Hashem's will that the fear of

heaven be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood." His students replied, "That and no more? Why should our fear of heaven not extend beyond the fear of flesh and blood?" He answered, "If that only would be your level of fear, then you would refrain from sinning. And this truly is so, because when a person sins, he says to himself, 'I hope that no one saw me sin.'"

Rashi (ibid.) explains that although a person fully believes that Hashem sees all, that knowledge does not necessarily stop him from sinning. Although his fear of Heaven should be greater than his fear of man, on a practical level, the fear of man is often greater. It is an emotional fear understood by the heart, while the (cont. P. 2)

Word to the Wise: Meaning within the word

The tefillah advises, וידעת היום והשבת אל לבבך, You are to know this day and take to your heart that Hashem is the only G-d. What is so unique about "this day"?

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuvah, Introduction to Sha'ar 2) tells us that affliction often has the effect of awakening a person's desire to repent his sins, and his realization that ה', Hashem is the only G-d. That is, in fact, a main purpose of affliction.

The prophet Hoshea (14:10) said: "For the ways of G-d are straight, the righteous walk in them, while the rebellious stumble in them." "The righteous walk in them" means that those who have chosen the right path respond to difficulties G-d sends into their lives by seeking G-d's assistance [*siyata d'Shmaya*] to progress along the path of teshuvah. On the other hand, "the rebellious stumble in them" refers to those who have chosen the opposite path, and rather than reaching out for G-d, they distance themselves further, and thus "stumble and fall."

Thus, the sooner a person comes to the inevitable recognition that ה' הוא האלקים בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ, Hashem is the only G-d—in heaven above and on the earth below—the sooner he finds help and comfort for his troubles and finds his suffering eased.



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עלינו Knowing the One and Only

(INSIGHT cont.)

fear of heaven is largely an intellectual concept.

An abstract belief in G-d is generally not sufficient enough to make people observe the mitzvos as they should. וידעת, הייום והשבת אל לבך, and take to your heart that Hashem is the only G-d—in heaven above and on the earth below—there is none other. After obtaining knowledge we must take it to heart—that is, develop an emotional commitment to act upon the knowledge.

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Candid Camera

For the 35 years of Billionaire Bank and Trust's existence, it had a firm policy that employees may not use their work

time to deal with personal business. The employees respected this rule to varying extents. Some saw it as law, others saw it as a suggestion, and still others saw it as a challenge to circumvent the restriction. Employees who were married and had families saw the rule as an impossibility; they needed to deal with their children, spouses, medical appointments, and dozens of other things that could not wait until after five or be crammed into an hour lunch break.

Then came the security cameras. After a rash of thefts in the company's offices, the management decided to install cameras throughout the building. Suddenly, every employee found it within himself or herself to adhere strictly to the "no personal business" rule. They knew that every moment of their day was now being recorded. The boss could see all.

There was no more room to cut corners.

To the extent that we feel Hashem's presence deep in our hearts, we feel His "eyes" on us at all times. A person who arrives at this level of awareness no longer deals in justifications and rationalizations. He lives the way he knows Hashem wants him to live, with the comforting as well as sobering certainty that Hashem is always there.

Try This!

- ▶ Try, for at least one brief moment, to awaken your heart to Hashem's presence when you say the words והשבת אל לבך .

Did You Know

▶ Refrain From Joining

Last week, we learned that when the congregation is saying the prayer עלינו, one should recite it with them (*Mishneh Berurah* 65:9). However, if one is in the middle of *Pesukei D'Zimrah*, and surely if he is in the middle of *Krias Shema* or its blessings, he should not interrupt to recite *Aleinu* with the congregation (*Sheilos U'Teshuvos Minchas Yitzchak*, 9:8-4).