

## Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

# BIRCHAS HASHACHAR

## The Gift Of Strength

### MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who gives strength to the weary.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו  
מלך העולם הנותן  
ליעף כח.

### WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



Although the simple meaning seems to suggest that Hashem gives strength to the tired person, Rabbi Schwab (Rav Schwab on Prayer, page 38) explains that the source of the word 'ya'eif' is from the verse (Yeshayahu 40:29) **'He gives strength to the weary, and grants abundant might to the powerless'**. In this context, 'ya'eif' means exhausted, worn out. This refers to Klal Yisroel who are completely worn out from the long exile which they have had to endure for so long.

### THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

## The Strength To Strive

G-d gives strength to the weary, enabling us to keep striving both as individuals and as a nation.

### INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

## Jewish Endurance

After a difficult day, there is an indescribable pleasure in lying down in bed, closing one's eyes and shutting out the world for a few hours. Knowing that "tomorrow is another day" is one of the key elements of hope. That G-d structured the world in such a way as to give us a break, to divide our worldly mission into manageable 24-hour packets that include a beginning, middle and end, is a kindness we seldom think about.

Even more miraculous is the strength that arises in a person just when he believes there is nothing left. Exactly when we've expended all our power, **G-d grants us His special Divine Assistance and inspires us to try just one more time**, to take just one more step, and **there, at last, we find our success**.

This explanation leaves open the question that this blessing, coming immediately after two blessings related to the Jewish people as a whole, seems out of sequence. It appears to belong with the earlier blessings that relate to a person's experience as he rises and faces the new day. However, according to the *Abudraham*, the blessing הנותן ליעף כח is directly linked to the Jewish people. He explains that this blessing addresses the weariness inherent in our age-old struggle against persecution and exile. As we wade through centuries of suffering, it is natural

to become despondent and despair of ever fulfilling our role as a "light unto the nations".

This blessing teaches us that we need not despair, for **G-d continually gives us the strength to overcome every obstacle and survive** with our G-dly mission and our Torah intact. It is this miracle that we recognize in the blessing הנותן ליעף כח.

Mark Twain, the famous writer, recognized this miracle publicly in his famed essay, which recounted that:

"...Egypt and Persia rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded and passed away; the Greeks and the Romans followed, and made their impact, and they are gone... The Jew has seen them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains..."

The vast Torah world that has flourished in America and Eretz Yisrael since the Holocaust is but one more dramatic chapter in the miraculous saga of the Jewish People. From where did a devastated, broken-hearted remnant find the strength to nurture a rebirth that defies all odds and expectations? G-d's Hand is there, apparent as daylight, granting strength to His people Israel.

### VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

## The Miracle Of Energy

The city finally decided to repair the main road outside the Newman's apartment building. To avoid traffic disruption, the work was scheduled from midnight to 4 a.m. Dovid Newman, a light sleeper, was awakened every night by the sound of jackhammers and steam shovels. When his alarm rang at 6:30 a.m., his eyes were



sticky with fatigue and his limbs felt as though they were made of lead. He dragged through the day, day after day, forgetting what it felt like to approach life with energy and enthusiasm. Both his body and his mind were consumed with one desire – rest. His actions became slow, his daily tasks

became burdensome. He felt like an old man.

At last, the work was finished and Dovid was able to sleep through the night. When he awoke, he instantly felt that something remarkable had occurred. His eyes were clear, his limbs energized -- it was as if he were 20 years younger! "Boruch atah Hashem," he recited that morning with the thrill of one who has witnessed a miracle. "Hanosein l'ya'eif koach!"

## Try This! ▶

Imagine the feeling of Dovid in the above story when he realized that G-d had granted him renewed energy. Or imagine yourself in a similar situation – having recovered your strength after an illness, having your first full night's sleep after a new baby joins the family, etc. This week, **recall that re-energized feeling** when saying the words "*Hanosein l'ya'eif koach*."

## Did You Know

### ▶ Easy Does It

When reciting a blessing, one may not engage in any other activity. (Mishneh Berurah 191:5, 25:56, 183:37, Sha'ar Hatziyun, Ibid:41). However, if one did so while reciting a blessing, it is valid (Be'ur Halacha, 191, s.v. 'B'odo').

**If possible, a person should not walk while reciting a blessing.**

However, if he will not be at ease because he will be upset over the delay to his journey and will be unable to apply his mind properly to the blessings, he may walk while making the blessings (See Siman 183:11, Mishneh Berurah, Ibid:36).