

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

BIRCHAS HASHACHAR

Help Is On The Way

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe,
Who removes sleep....

And may it be Your will, Hashem, our G-d... **Do not bring us into the power of error, nor into the power of transgression and sin....**

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך
העולם. המעביר שנה....
ויהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו...
**ואל תביאנו לא
לידי חטא. ולא לידי
עברה ועון....**

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning

There is a difference between the three types of sin. חטא refers to a sin that is done ב-שוגג - by mistake. A more serious level of sin is עברה - transgression - in which the evil inclination overpowers the person. Such a sin is not done with premeditation, but it also is not done by mistake. Rather, it is done on impulse. However, if left unchecked, the level of sin can escalate into the most serious kind of sin - עון - which is an intentional violation of Jewish law (Iyun Tefillah).



THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

How To Avoid Sin

Hashem will help us in our effort to avoid sinning against Him.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Why We Need Hashem's Help

The Gemara teaches that everything is in the hands of Heaven *except* for fear of Heaven (spiritual matters) (*Berachos* 33b). That is in the hands of Man.

It would seem, then, that in our effort to steer clear of transgression, we are on our own. We must do it ourselves, for that is the one factor of our lives that Hashem has left in our control. Of what use is it, in that case, to pray to Hashem, "Do not bring us into the power of error or the power of transgression.?"

The Maharsha answers this question, by citing Chazal's (*Yoma* 38b; *Hilchos Teshuvah* 6:5) promise that, "One who comes to purify himself (*bah l'taheir*) receives *siyata d'Shmaya* — Divine assistance, and **without Divine assistance it is impossible to withstand temptation.**" The person praying for spiritual assistance is, in effect, coming to purify himself, and will receive Heavenly assistance that enables him to ascend far beyond his personal spiritual limitations.

Rav Matisyahu Salomon explains that a prayer for help in this area, when said with sincerity, can be the fulfillment of the phrase "*bah l'taheir*— he comes to purify [himself]." That is because someone who deeply desires purity expresses that desire by praying for it. He "comes to purify

himself" and merits Heaven's help. Therefore, prayer appears to be the key to success.

Prayer is a preventive medicine that inoculates against a myriad of sins. Rav Chaim Volozhin taught his students that prayer could protect them from encountering such challenges as anger, *lashon hora*, looking at improper things and other sins which may cross one's path uninvited. He advised, "**Pray before there is a misfortune, because that ... is what will save [the person] from the test...**"

In the spiritual realm, we all try, but we do not always succeed. The factor that provides the leverage – the extra help in lifting ourselves up by our own bootstraps, is *Siyata d'Shmaya*, Heavenly help. When we pray that Hashem should "*not put us in the power of sin*", we pray that our efforts to live good, righteous lives will be rewarded with His help. Without it, we know that our efforts can easily dissipate into thin air, resulting in nothing more than frustration.

But because this prayer tells us that we are not alone in our efforts, it always behooves us to keep trying. King Solomon (*Mishlei* 24:16) said, "The Tzaddik falls seven times and rises." He gets up each time he falls and he tries again, until finally, Hashem brings him to a level beyond that which his own power could ever achieve.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Wandering Into Dangerous Territory

Aryeh arrives in Yerushalayim for his first year as a student there. He gets settled and, eager to explore, sets out with his friend Gershon for a long walk through the busy streets and into the Old City. They walk and talk, absorbing the atmosphere, not realizing that they are wandering into a neighborhood that seems distinctly hostile.

Some Arabs begin yelling words at them which, while they cannot decipher them, are clearly not words of greeting. Which way should they turn to get out of this neighborhood? If



they try to reverse their route, they will have to walk by all those who are now **staring so menacingly** at them. They look at the street to their left, the one to their right and the path straight ahead. They choose a right turn that seems to lead to a wider, more populated street where maybe they will be a little safer.

What they don't know is that every other direction would have led them to certain disaster. The crowd behind them was discussing what they might be able to achieve in ransom, should they grab

these boys off the street. The path to the left would have led them to a gang of young thugs who would have robbed them and probably knifed them as well. Straight ahead, just out of view, was an anti-Israel demonstration. The path they chose led them to an IDF soldier there on a security mission, who directed them safely out of the neighborhood.

Like these boys, we know the world is filled with dangers – spiritual dangers – into whose clutches we can easily wander. **We pray that Hashem will guide our path** to circumvent these temptations and tests of our spiritual fortitude, for without His guidance, we can easily lose our bearings.

Try This!

▶ What if every time sin beckoned, a loud alarm went off, clearly warning you that you had better rethink your plan? Imagine the clarity you would feel if you were free from self-doubt and "gray areas". This week, revive this feeling when you say "ואל תביאנו לא לידי חטא ולא לידי עבירה ועון."

Did You Know

Late For Shacharis

▶ If a person arrives late for a Shacharis minyan, he should recite the Birchos Hashachar, even though he will have to skip parts of Pesukei D'Zimrah (*Halichos Shlomo*, Chapter 6: 7). Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach used to arrive ten minutes before Shacharis began so that he would be able to recite both the Birchos Hashachar and the entire Pesukei D'Zimrah.