

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

MA TOVU

Hashem's Kindness

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel. **As for me, through your abundant kindness I will enter Your House, I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You...**

מה טובו אהליך יעקב
 משכנתיך ישראל.
 ואני ברב חסדך
 אבוא ביתך,
 אשתחוה אל היכל
 קדשך ביראתך...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



It is a great *chesed* of Hashem that He allows us to enter His House to pray, even while we are still tainted with sin (*Iyun Tefilla*). **When a person sincerely recognizes Hashem's chesed** with the words "BeRov Chasdicha - in Your abundant kindness," **he further arouses Hashem's chesed, creating a more favorable reception for the prayers he will soon begin.** This phrase confers a further benefit, as well; it evokes the merit of our forefathers by reminding Hashem of the *chesed* performed by our forefather Avraham. It is in that merit that Hashem, in turn, bestows His great *chesed* upon us (*Sefer Tomer Devora*).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Our Good Fortune

Appreciate that Hashem bestows kindness by establishing His holiness in our places of prayer.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

How to Find the Shechinah

Chazal tell us that because we no longer merit having the Holy Temple, our *shuls* serve as a *Mikdash Me'at*, a small Sanctuary, and our prayers substitute for the offerings. Each and every Jew can strive to pray in a place that enables him to achieve his direct connection with Heaven.

The Gemara (*Berachos* 6a) teaches that the *Shechinah* resides in a *shul* when ten men pray together. A fundamental question arises: If Hashem is Omnipresent, why do we single out the *Shechinah's* Presence in a *shul* during *tefillah*? What is the significance of the *Shechinah's* Presence in this sacred place if Hashem is everywhere and anywhere? Rav Chaim Friedlander, *Mashgiach* of the Ponevezh Yeshivah (*Sifsei Chaim, Pirkei Emunah V'Hashgachah*, Volume 1, page 170 (citing the *Ramchal*)), provides an explanation that "*Shechinah*" — from the phraseology "*that which resides in your midst*" — represents *our* relationship with Hashem. Thus, although His Presence is indeed constant, **our awareness of the Shechinah is stronger when we are inspired by an occasion or a place of holiness.** To the extent that we seek the *Shechinah*, we find It. Our task as we pray is to expose our

souls to the "rays" of the *Shechinah* — to shed the layers of distraction and habituation — and feel Its radiant Presence in *shul* all around us.

When a person comes to *shul* and prays, he must realize that he is praying to the only One Who can, and will, help him. In the words of Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus:

"So it is, when a person speaks to his Creator, and mentions His Name, if he only would think for a moment about the meaning of Hashem's Name, at that moment an enormous happiness would shine inside...Specifically, the One he 'meets' in *shul* ... the One to Whom he is now speaking, He has the ability to help the person who is about to pray.... And He (Hashem) assists all who sincerely ask Him for help."

Rav Pincus comments that a person untouched by joy as he comes to *shul* to pray must be lacking in his perception of Who Hashem is. On the other hand, a person who truly feels in his heart that he is addressing the One Who has the answer to all his problems and the desire to fulfill his needs, rises to his feet with enthusiasm, joyful at the opportunity he has been given to come to *shul* to connect with his Creator.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

The Advantage Of Good Connections

For weeks, Zev has been trying to get an appointment with the chief lending officer of his bank. Zev's business is struggling, but he has developed a sound plan to revive it and enable it to grow. The key element in his plan is an infusion of cash, which he hopes his bank will agree to lend him. However, for weeks, his efforts to meet with his banker have failed to produce any result.

One day, he is discussing his situation with his cousin Shimon. It turns out that the



elusive bank official is Shimon's old friend, and he offers to help facilitate a meeting between the banker and Zev. The very next day, Zev receives a telephone call from the banker. "I'm sorry it's taken so long to get back to you," he apologizes. "We've been very busy for the past couple of weeks. But Shimon has told me a little about your plan and I'd like to help you out if I can. Please come by tomorrow and we'll talk."

As Zev walks into the bank the next day, he is overwhelmed

by a sense of gratitude. He has been given his opportunity to state his case. His plans have a chance to come to fruition. His previous mistakes in running his business can now be rectified. All because a door has been opened to him, his life can move forward.

The door to G-d's "bank" is open to every Jew every day. We can petition him not only for our financial needs, but for health, spiritual growth, our children's well-being, peace, and all that is meaningful to us and to our nation. It is a kindness too grand to quantify, but one we should surely recognize each and every day.

Try This!

▶ Before you enter *shul* each day this week, think of one need that is particular pressing at this time in your life. When you say the words "b'rov chasdechah" in Ma Tovvu, remind yourself that you've come to the place where that need will be heeded and fulfilled.

Did You Know

▶ **Greetings In Shul**

Once the time for praying has arrived, it is forbidden for a person to go to his fellow's front door in order to greet him (i.e. say "good morning") (*Orach Chaim, Siman 89:2*) or to go from his place in *shul* to another's place in order to greet him (*Mishneh Berurah 89:9, ad loc. #9*).

However, if one is required to go elsewhere to attend to some permitted business (i.e. see a doctor), he may say "good morning" to someone in that place (*Beur Halacha, ibid, s.v. 'V'afilu'*). Similarly, if someone passes by him in *shul* (before davening has begun) or on the way to *shul*, he may say "good morning" (*Mishneh Berurah 89:16*).