

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

אשרי

Reinforcing Emunah

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

The splendorous glory of Your power and Your wondrous deeds I shall discuss. And of Your awesome power they will speak, and Your greatness I shall relate. A recollection of Your abundant goodness they will utter and of Your righteousness they will sing exultantly....

הדר כבוד הודך, ודברי נפלאותיך אשיחה. ועוז נוראתיך יאמרו, וגדלתך אספרנה. זכר רב טובך יביעו, וצדקתך ידגנו...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



“Of Your awesome power they will speak... and Your greatness I shall relate.” King David suggests that there is a difference between himself and the nations of the world. ועוז נוראתיך, the people of the world are amazed and will tell all the details of Hashem’s power. This refers to the great turmoil and upheavals in nature that occur when He punishes the wicked, i.e. the splitting of the Reed Sea. Seeing the might of Hashem’s hand causes them to stand in awe of Him.

King David, however, relates how these events actually reveal Hashem’s goodness, וגדלתך אספרנה, as King David understood that every event, even the punishment of the wicked, is a manifestation of Hashem’s goodness.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Loud and Clear

Verbalizing Hashem’s grandeur and kindness strengthens our emunah.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Telling the World, Telling Yourself

Is it necessary to discuss Hashem’s wondrous deeds? To speak about His awesome power? To relate Hashem’s greatness? To recollect Hashem’s abundant goodness? The answer is a resounding yes! Our daily lives are rich with blessings great and small, and we know deep in our hearts that all of this comes from Hashem. In order to transform one’s feeling of emunah into one’s reality, it is necessary to speak about it, because speech has the power to transform thoughts and emotions into actuality.

A verse in Tehillim (116:10) states: האמנתי כי -- I have kept faith because I speak.” Rav Matisyahu Salomon (With Hearts Full of Faith, Artscroll, page 50) explains that this principle played an important role in Joseph’s ability to survive, and even thrive, as a slave in Egypt:

The Torah (Bereishis 39:3-4) tells us, “And his master saw that G-d was with him, and that G-d brings success to everything he does...and he appointed him over his household.” “G-d was with him,”

the Midrash (Tanchuma Vayeishev, Siman 8) explains that Joseph constantly spoke about G-d to those around him...When Potiphar praised him for a job well done, Joseph would say, “...I deserve no credit. It is all the Master of the Universe. Thank Him.”

The Shelah Hakadosh (Sha’ar Ha’Osios, Os Aleph-Emes V’Emunah) writes “Included in [building] ...emunah, one should say of all acts that he wants to do, even in a short period of time, ‘I will do this im yirtzeh Hashem (G-d willing).’” Sincerely saying these words is a powerful way to create a reality out of an amorphous feeling within. Kaf HaChayim adds that this concept is alluded to in the verse in Mishlei (19:21) ועצת ה' היא תקום -- The will of God will always be upheld.” The Hebrew word “היא,” which is the pronoun referring to the will of G-d, is spelled with the three Hebrew letters: “ה,” “י,” “א.” These are the first Hebrew letters of the phrase א-ם (ה) ה' (י) ירצה (א).

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

The Power of Saying It

“Tell your child, ‘I love you,’” advised the parenting counselor. The father was not the “mushy” type, and the idea seemed foreign. “He knows I love him,” said the father. “But you have to say it,” the counselor insisted. And so that night, before the father sent his little boy off to bed, he kissed his head and said,



“Good night, Aaron....I love you.” Strangely, although the father had no doubt that he had always loved his child, saying it seemed somehow to “seal the deal.” It gave substance and life to what would otherwise have remained an amorphous feeling in his heart.

Likewise, when one speaks of Hashem’s greatness and acknowledges that everything that happens occurs by virtue of His will, one’s vague, emotional feelings of emunah become something more concrete. Saying Ashrei reinforces this effect each time it is recited with sincerity, helping to build an emunah that is deep-rooted in the realities of life.

Try This!

Imagine being at the splitting of the Yam Suf. Imagine the churning sea, the walls of water, the incredible vision of all of this taking shape before your eyes. Amid the hundreds of thousands of Jews, you march down into the dry sea-bed, filled with a belief in G-d that reaches down to the very marrow of your bones. Imagine this moment and recall your sense of awe as you say the words נוראתיך יאמרו, וגדלתך אספרנה.

Did You Know

What to Omit

If one happens to arrive at shul so late that if he were to recite the entire Pesukei d’Zimrah, he would not finish in time to recite Shemoneh Esrei with the minyan, some authorities permit him to skip certain sections of Pesukei d’Zimrah in order to pray Shemoneh Esrei with a minyan (Mishneh Berurah 52:1). The Chayei Adam writes that if it is necessary to omit parts of Pesukei d’Zimrah on Shabbos, one should rather omit those psalms in Pesukei d’Zimrah that are added on Shabbos, from the psalm LaMenatzeiach until the prayer Yehi Chevod (Ashkenaz) or Baruch She’Amar (Sefard), and say the same verses that he says on weekdays, since the latter are said more regularly (Mishneh Berurah ibid:5). Next week we will discuss which psalms one should say if he has more time.