

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

אשרי

Reverence and Sincerity

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

The will of those who fear Him He will do; and their cry He will hear, and save them. Hashem protects all who love Him; ... We will bless G-d from this time and forever, Hallelu-yah!

רצון יראיו יעשה,  
ואת שועתם ישמע  
ויושיעם. שומר ה' את כל  
אהביו... ואנחנו נברך י-ה  
מעתה ועד עולם, הללויה

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the word



The text רצון יראיו יעשה... ויושיעם, *The will of those who fear Him He will do; ... and save them*, is seemingly redundant, since the verse says רצון יראיו יעשה, "The will of those who fear Him He will do" and then it goes on to add, "and He will save them." The *Kedushas Levi* (on *Parshas Vayigash*) cites the *Maggid of Mezritch*, who explains that before Hashem bestows His bounty on the Jewish people, רצון יראיו יעשה -- He "creates" the will, in those who fear Him, to desire the gifts which He deems fitting for the Jewish people. This then prompts them to ask for those gifts. After they "cry to" Hashem for those gifts, He hears their prayer and fulfills their request.

**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

*The Power of Sincere Prayer*

Hashem fulfills the prayers of those who show the sincerity of their prayers, through their actions.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

*Signs of Sincerity*

רצון יראיו... ואת שועתם ישמע ויושיעם, it is *the will of those who fear Him ... and their cry He [Hashem] will hear, and save them*. Why does the verse state that it is the cry of those who fear Hashem that He will hear, and in response, save them? Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein (*Chashukei Chemed on Meseches Brachos*, Page 190) cites his brother-in-law, Horav Chaim Kanievsky, that Hashem's "hearing" the "crying" is not a result of the individual's voice being louder, but rather it is his emotions and deep, inner yearnings that are intensified, and amplified.

But this added intensity, while it can accomplish a great deal, can best achieve its maximum results when it is consistent with a person's general approach to prayer. **Reverence toward prayer is a top indicator – indeed, the hallmark -- of "those who fear Hashem."** The key is to "cry out" --to intensify one's inner emotions and yearning in prayer, and also to show reverence for prayer. That is the one whose "cry" is heard, and Hashem will save him, as the verse states: רצון יראיו... ואת שועתם ישמע ויושיעם, it is *the will of those who fear Him ... that Hashem will hear, and save them*.

*A young Torah scholar in a small community in Eretz Yisrael became gravely ill. A prayer-gathering was convened during which the assemblage poured out their hearts to the Al-mighty. Afterwards, the group discussed*

*ways to help their stricken friend. One of the suggestions that was presented and agreed upon was to have everyone obligate himself to come to davening on time, not to leave until after davening had been concluded, and not to speak during davening.*

*From that day on, davening changed. Everyone was there when Birchos HaShachar were recited. The last Kaddish was no longer "orphaned" with barely a minyan remaining to answer "amen." The decorum in shul was enhanced. Davening became a serious pursuit. Slowly, there were subtle spiritual changes in the lives of all of the participants. The most significant result of this change was that the scholar who was ill returned to complete health.*

*Still, people were left wondering... why had these simple acts of self-discipline by the congregation achieved so much? The rabbanim acquainted with this phenomenal experience analyzed the forces at work, explaining that the message one seems to express through a drawn-out Shemoneh Esrei—that he takes davening seriously -- can be undermined when one arrives at davening late and leaves early. When the entire community joins together to demonstrate the significance of davening in their lives, their prayers achieve the greatest efficacy.* (Adapted from "Peninim on The Torah," Parshas Vaera, Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum, Hebrew Academy of Cleveland.)

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

*Putting His Best Foot Forward*

Yosef wanted a promotion. His boss had set up an appointment for 2 p.m. that afternoon, when they would discuss Yosef's performance and prospects for his future. When the time arrived, Yosef was on the phone with his mechanic discussing work being done on the car. Eager to ensure the car would be ready later that day, Yosef decided to finish up his conversation with the mechanic before going in to see his boss.

Arriving ten minutes late, he was distracted by thoughts of



the huge mechanic bill that he would soon receive. Worse yet, he needed to get to the bank before 3 p.m. to make a deposit. "I hope this doesn't take too long," he thought as his boss spoke to him. He stole a quick look at his watch...now what was it he was planning to say?

Obviously, Yosef's actions and thoughts did not convey the impression that he seriously wanted his boss to consider him for a promotion. He put off the meeting, insulted

the boss by arriving late, didn't concentrate on his conversation with the boss, and couldn't wait to get out of the office to tend to his personal business. Even if he tells himself, "I really did my best to get the promotion. I went straight to the boss and talked it over with him," he would realize deep within that he was not likely to receive a positive response. Similarly, one's daily meetings with Hashem are much more likely to be fruitful when one prepares, organizes his thoughts, arrives on time, avoids distraction, and sticks with the "conversation" right to the end.

**Try This!**

▶ Commit yourself for one week to *prepare* to daven (i.e. arrive at minyan) five minutes before *actually beginning* to daven. During that time, divert and empty your heart from all foreign thoughts and view yourself as if standing in front of the *Shechinah*. After a week, assess what impact this practice has had on the quality of your *tefillah*.

**Did You Know**

▶ *Think Upward*

According to *Ta'amei Haminhagim*, (*Inyanim Shonim*, Os 177), it is customary for men to touch their tefillin when reciting the verse "*pose'ach es yadecha*" in Ashrei. *Ben Ish Chai* (*Vayigash*, Os 12, *Sheilos U'Teshuvos Torah Lishmah*, *Siman 31*) says there are those who open their hands and/or lift them heavenward while reciting "*pose'ach es yadecha*." This is said to evoke Moshe Rabbeinu and others, who would often lift their hands when praying. *Sefer Chareidim* (Chapter 4) states that there are those who lift their eyes heavenwards when saying the verses פותח את ידך and עיני כל אליך ישברו...