

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

YIGDAL

13 Principles of Faith

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Exalted be the Living G-d and praised; He exists—unbounded by time is His existence...

יגדל אלקים חי
וישתבח, נמצא ואין
עת אל מציאותו...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



In Yigdal, we say, “Exalted be the Living G-d and **praised.**” The Rambam writes (Berachos 10:26), writes that “whoever is profuse in thanking Hashem and praising him consistently is considered praiseworthy.” This language is Pesach Haggadah’s words, “And whoever is profuse in telling the story of the exodus from Egypt is considered praiseworthy (*meshubach*).” Rav Mattisyahu Salomon explains he learned from his Rebbe, Rav Eliahu Lapian, that the word *meshubach* is connected to *yayin meshubach*, improved wine. By speaking at length about the exodus, he says, a person becomes improved. Similarly, **by thanking and praising Hashem profusely, we become meshubach, better, higher, holier, worthier people**, thereby making our prayers more effective.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Interacting With Our “Living G-d”

“יגדל” comprises the basic principles of Jewish faith as formulated by the Rambam. It describes our concept of how G-d interacts with the Jewish people and all of Creation. The framework for all of these principles is that our G-d is a “living G-d,” the active, primal and constant source of all that occurs.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Connecting to the Essence of Everything

As you go through your daily routine, it often seems that there’s life, and then there’s G-d. Life is the real-time, practical aspects of your day, whether pleasant or difficult, productive or futile. G-d, it would seem, is confined to the praying, learning, blessings before and after food, mitzvos and acts of chessed.

But Israel’s G-d doesn’t dwell in one compartment. He is *Elokim chai* -- the “living G-d,” Who is the essence of every event, object, achievement and emotion you encounter in your day. He is a constant, active force, the main character in the life’s story of every human being and of the Jewish nation.

Ever wonder why when there is no pressing problem or hovering fear in our lives, we often times pray as though it were an act of little consequence? The answer lies in the fact that on a normal basis, we do not perceive that G-d determines our success. When we are able to cure so many illnesses, develop such advanced technology and access so much information, we can more easily blind ourselves to G-d’s

constant management of every aspect of life.

The recognition of Hashem’s involvement even in the daily “small stuff” of life is, according to Rav Chaim Friedlander, a higher level of *emunah*, belief in Hashem: “Turning to Hashem for success in the simplest things is the main [path of] ascent in the work of *bitachon* because for complicated matters, even people with weak *emunah* pray to Hashem.”

While prayer and *emunah* may be seen as two separate concepts, the fact is that prayer is one of the ultimate expressions of *emunah*. In fact, Rabbeinu Yonah states that if a person does not recognize God’s presence and power, he has no reason to pray.

Cognizance of the One to Whom one is praying — which requires a vibrant belief in His presence — is the “operating system” that energizes all prayer. As the Chazon Ish wrote, “An exalted aspect of *tefillah* is the vivid picturing of how Hashem hears our lips’ utterances and takes heed of our heart’s meditations.”

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Unveiling Hashem’s ‘Invisible Hand’

A child wakes up in the morning in his bed, warm beneath his blankets, his head buried in a soft down pillow. He believes that it is his bed, his blanket and his pillow. He dresses and goes to the kitchen to eat breakfast. In his view, the clothes are his clothes, the toast and eggs on his plate are his food, and the cup of orange juice next to his place, which has its name on it, is his cup.

What the child does not see is



that all of “his” belongings are in fact purchased and prepared for him by his mother. He does not perceive her active participation in every facet of his day; he has a bed and fresh linen because she purchased them and launders the linen; he has his very own juice cup because she bought it and painted his name on it; he has a plate of food because she purchased the ingredients,

cooked the food and served it to him. Yet he perceives none of this. His mother is an “invisible hand” guiding his life along, unseen and yet essential to every aspect of his day.

Like this child, who lives a life invisibly orchestrated by his mother, we conduct our lives using the props and scenery placed before us by the Creator. G-d has written the script, created the characters and has even written the ending of the story - the coming of *Moshiach*.

Try This!

Think of a moment in your life in which you felt clearly that G-d’s hand was at work. Relive that moment and how it felt. Choose one image, like a snapshot, that portrays that moment for you, and this week, visualize that image when you say the words “*Elokim chai*” in Yigdal.

Did You Know

► *Our Merit To Bring Moshiach*

Q: If prior greater generations were unable to bring the final redemption, what is to say ours can?

A: Rabbi Shimon Schwab once commented that if he were asked what merit the Jewish people possess that makes them deserving of *Moshiach*, he would answer:

“...Normally, a person who is disappointed over and over again would give up... If we ask what our generation can say for itself as to why it deserves the coming of *Moshiach*, we reply that we deserve it because: We didn’t give up! We waited patiently and we are still waiting—no matter how many disappointments and backslidings we had to experience. We don’t know the word ‘yishu,’ to give up.”

The Chofetz Chaim (Tzipisa L’Yeshua, Chapter 1) similarly explains, “With the length of the exile, the merits of the Jewish people grow and become greater from generation to generation from the merits... of their waiting and hoping for the coming of *Moshiach* for such a long time...”

As the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 88:7) explains: “Everything is (bound up) with *kivuy* (hopeful awaiting)... ‘Wait for salvation for it is close at hand!’ Thus the verse (Yeshayahu 56:1) says, ‘For My salvation is near to come.’”