

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

הללוי-ה שירו לה'

Avenging Israel's Suffering

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

...For Hashem favors His nation, He adorns the humble with salvation...to exact **vengeance among the nations**, rebukes among the governments.... To execute upon them written **judgment**—that will be the splendor of all His devout ones. Hallelu-kah!

...כי רוצה ה' בעמו, יפאר
עניים בישועה... לעשות
נקמה בגוים, תוכחות
בלאמים.... לעשות בהם
משפט כתוב, הדר הוא
לכל חסידיו, הללוי-ה.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



What is the reason there should be “vengeance against the nations?” The obvious reason is because of the suffering they have inflicted upon the Jewish people. Nevertheless, that suffering is always a result of Hashem’s own decree, leaving the idea of “vengeance” still difficult to understand.

In fact, the Talmud (Gittin 56a) tells us that when Emperor Nero realized that the destruction of Jerusalem and the second Holy Temple had been decreed by G-d, he wished to know whether he would be rewarded for fulfilling G-d’s will. The answer he received was, “I will take My revenge against Edom through the agency of My people, Israel ...etc.”

Anaf Yosef (Ibid) asks, why Hashem would take revenge against Nero, who fulfilled Hashem’s will and meted out G-d’s decree? Ramban (Bereishis 15:13) answers that there is no doubt that if G-d issues a decree, it is meritorious to obey it. However, those who oppress the Jewish people are not doing so in order to do Hashem’s will. They have their own, ulterior motives, and their oppression goes far beyond what Hashem has decreed. Therefore, Hashem’s vengeance is warranted.

For example, the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt had been Divinely ordained, as the verse (Bereishis 15:13) states, “They will enslave them and oppress them.” Yet Pharaoh and the Egyptians oppressed the Jewish people to a greater extent than mandated by the decree and therefore, they were subject to Hashem’s vengeance.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Hashem's Justice

Hashem’s precise justice will ensure that ultimately, He will avenge the suffering of the Jewish people at the hands of the nations of the world.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

In Hashem's Presence

לעשות נקמה בגוים... לעשות בהם משפט כתוב.
To exact **vengeance among the nations**... To execute upon them written **judgment**. Rav Schwab (Rav Schwab on Prayer, Page 206) explains that “we, as humans, are incapable of meting out punishment severe enough to fit the enormity of the crimes which were perpetrated against the Jewish people over the years. When the Nazi murderer Adolph Eichmann, his name should be erased, was hanged, he died only once. This does not account for even one outcry of one little child who was tortured, nor for one drop of blood which was shed—and there were billions of such drops. We have no idea how this could be avenged. But we do know that it will happen, and that it will not be done by us, rather by Hashem.”

The all-encompassing nature of G-d’s judgment is illustrated in the narrative of the world’s first murder. After Kayin killed his brother Hevel, G-d inquired, “What have you done? The sounds of your brother’s bloods cry out to Me from the ground.” (Bereshis 4:10) G-d uses the plural form of the Hebrew word “dam” (blood) to indicate that Kayin not only killed his brother, but he also killed all the descendants that might have come from him (Rashi, ad loc). A person’s value is not assessed only according to what he is at the moment; it encompasses the vast potential in each person. Therefore, when Hashem avenges a wrong, He avenges not only the act itself, but all the loss and damage the wrongful act has caused.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Law Enforcement

At the intersection of Main Street and Highway 4 in Anytown, U.S.A., there used to be a policeman monitoring the traffic. But with the town’s budget crunch, the officer was reassigned to a more vital job, and in his place, a small video camera was installed. No one noticed it. Gradually, cars began sneaking past the red light at odd hours of the day when traffic was light. Why sit at a light for 60 long seconds,



when clearly, there were no cars coming from the other direction?

For months, people thought they were getting away with their scoff-law driving habits. Then, the tickets starting coming in the mail. Each was accompanied by a black-and-white photo of the offending car, with its license plate

clearly visible, zooming past the red light. The offenders could not deny their wrongdoing; they thought they had gotten away with something, but they had not.

To a far greater degree, the nations of the world that have oppressed the Jewish people will some day have this unwelcome awakening. Hashem has recorded every instance of senseless cruelty, of heartless oppression and betrayal. He will not let His people’s suffering go unavenged.

Try This!

► Think of a situation – either in your own life, that of another person, or even a situation from Jewish history – that cries out for justice. Imagine that in one flash, Hashem sets it right. That feeling of immense joy and satisfaction is the feeling to recall when saying the words

לעשות נקמה בגוים...

Did You Know

► While You Wait

While waiting for a minyan to gather, the prayer leader should delay saying the blessing Yishtabach and remain silent until a minyan has arrived. However, the people davening with the minyan must recite Yishtabach first and then wait to say Borchu.

While waiting, one may learn without saying the words. One may delay for as long as half an hour. (Mishneh Berurah 53:10)