

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

אז ישיר

Thanks for Everything

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Who is like You among the heavenly powers, Hashem. Who is like You, mighty in holiness, **too awesome for praise, doing wonders...** May fear and terror befall them...the sanctuary, my L-rd, that Your hands established.

מי כמכה באלם ה'.
מי כמכה נאדר בקדש,
נורא תהלת עשה
פלא... תפל עליהם
אימתה ופחד... מקדש
אד-ני כוננו ידיך.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The word אימה is the dread of a superior force or power which is present. פחד, on the other hand, is the dread of a threatened danger. Fright arises from

the imminence of the coming danger. In our context, their fright was at the might and greatness of Hashem, which had suddenly become apparent to them. The fear stems from what they would expect from such power (Rav Samson Rafael Hirsch, Shemos, 15:16).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Doing It All

Hashem is the only power in existence. Therefore, we owe Him gratitude for everything in our world and in our lives.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

The More the Better

נורא תהלת עשה פלא, "It is awesome to praise Hashem when He performs wondrous deeds." Although it is natural to praise Hashem when we witness wondrous deeds, the Rambam (Berachos 10:26) writes that praising Hashem is called for in all situations. "This is the general principle: A person should always cry out [in prayer] regarding what the future will bring and plead for mercy, and he should express his gratitude for what has passed; he should thank and praise to the best of his ability. And whoever is profuse in thanking Hashem and praising him consistently is considered praiseworthy."

The Rambam is speaking about two tasks we must perform when we stand in prayer in front of Hashem. First, we must express our deepest appreciation to Hashem for all the myriad blessings He has showered on us in the past. We must thank Him for our health, our sustenance, our families, our very lives. We must tell Him that we fully realize that without Him, we have no existence whatsoever.

Secondly, we must cry out to Him, passionately beseeching Him to sustain us as He has in the past and to grant us any particular requests we

have at that moment. These are the two themes around which our prayers are constructed. We thank Hashem for all the good He has done for us in the past, and we plead with Him to take care of us in the future.

The Rambam concludes, "And whoever is profuse in thanking Hashem and praising him consistently is considered praiseworthy (*meshubach*)."

This language is reminiscent of the final lines in the Avadim Hayinu of the Haggadah, "And whoever is profuse in telling the story of the exodus from Egypt is considered praiseworthy (*meshubach*)."

Rav Eliyahu Lopian explains that "*meshubach*" does not just mean that a person deserves to be praised for doing a good thing. Rather, he connects the word to *yayin meshubach*, fine wine -- wine that has been improved. By speaking at length about the exodus, says Rav Lopian, a person is improved. Likewise, by thanking and praising Hashem profusely, we become *meshubach* – improved. We become higher, holier, worthier people, and this in itself enhances the power of our prayers.

(Adapted from "On Prayer and Gratitude," by Rav Mattisyahu Salomon, Foreword, Praying With Fire 2)

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Lucky Me

When Zev got home from work in the evening, he faced another job. Helping his children review their learning, helping his wife get the children into bed, rushing out to ma'ariv and home to the remnants of the day's mess – family life was a chore.

When Meir arrived home from work, he relished the expectant looks on his children's faces. He struggled with them through



their homework, amazed at the unfolding of their intelligence. He told his toddler a bed-time story, smiling as her eyelids flickered and closed in peaceful sleep. He left for ma'ariv and came home to help his wife put the house back in order, grateful for all she did to keep their lives running smoothly. It was as if Hashem had

designed his world just for his delight. Meir's family life was an avodah – a way of coming closer to Hashem

To give Hashem the praise due to Him, a person must perceive His greatness. When we stop to appreciate the abundant gifts Hashem places in our lives each day, the gratitude and praise flow naturally. We bind ourselves closer to our Creator, and this in turn increases the flow of goodness into our lives.

Try This!

► Think of something in your life that you appreciate – your home, a member of your family, a healthy body, a clear mind, a kind friend. Focus on the beauty of that one gift; think of all its positive traits and how fortunate you are that Hashem gave it to *you*. Think about people who don't have this gift, and realize that *you* do have it. Recall the image of this gift when you say the words **נורא תהלת עשה פלא**.

Did You Know

► More Than a Mitzvah

Although we learn from many sources that *tefillah* is necessary to bring Hashem's blessings down from heaven into our world, according to the Ramban and many other authorities, *tefillah* is not one of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah. Rather, it is a Rabbinic mitzvah.

This raises a question: can a Rabbinic mitzvah be so important that the world could not operate without it?

The answer to this question is that *tefillah's* power stems from its ability to transport the person who is praying to a higher spiritual plane. The Alter of Kelm explains: "The masses think that *tefillah* is a mitzvah comparable to any other mitzvah... (however) *tefillah* must exist as the method to merit the ability to revere Hashem and to be able to feel His goodness."

This is the concept we must understand in both our minds and our hearts. Through it, we can see *tefillah* as it really exists— an awesome force that is constantly present and available to us, every day of our lives.

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