

## Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

# ברכת קריאת שמע

*The Source of Light and Darkness*

### MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who **forms light and creates darkness**, makes peace and creates all.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו  
מלך העולם, **יוצר אור**  
**ובורא חשך**, עשה  
שלום ובורא את הכל.

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

This blessing said in the morning during Shacharis thanks Hashem for creating **אור**, "light" and **חשך**, "darkness."

However, the Torah does not recount Hashem creating darkness; it only relates (Bereishis 1:3) that Hashem proclaimed יהי אור, "let there be light." It would seem inappropriate, then, to identify Hashem in this tefillah with the words "[Who] creates darkness."

Abarbanel explains that **יוצר אור ובורא חשך** refers to "good" and "bad." The term "light" represents

everything in life that people normally perceive as "good," such as health, wealth, happiness, freedom and friendship. "Darkness" represents suffering and difficulty. The Gemara (Berachos 11a) explains that proclaiming Hashem as the Creator of both light and darkness answers the philosophers who claim that the god who creates goodness cannot be the same one who creates evil. It demonstrates the Jewish faith in Hashem's pure goodness, acknowledging that even that which appears negative is simply a form of goodness that is hidden from human comprehension.

### THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

#### One Source

Hashem is the sole source for everything in creation.

### INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

#### Perceiving Hashem's Love

In Michtav M'Eliyahu, Rav Dessler asks an age-old question that hinders many people's ability to serve Hashem with a full heart. Why do the wicked so often prosper in this world? Rav Dessler explains with an example of a teacher and a disruptive student.

*"What does a good teacher do about the pupil who simply does not respond to all attempts to put him on the right path? He certainly will not continue to punish him to no purpose. It is obvious that a point will be reached when any further punishment will be counterproductive. Therefore, the only alternative is to give up on the student—reluctantly and with regret that there is absolutely no hope for even the smallest improvement. At that point, all contact will be broken and the pupil will no longer be 'bothered' by any further attempts to redeem him for constructive work."*

*"G-d works in a very similar way in his dealings with a wicked person. When G-d punishes for sin it is not because G-d is offended by the individual's wrongdoing. Whoever does wrong hurts only himself. What then is the purpose of punishment for sin? The purpose ...is to demonstrate to him the area in which he erred. The essence of punishment is rebuke, telling the sinner, 'This is your error; correct it'... If this applies to a teacher, it certainly it applies to Hashem"* (Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 1, page 21).

A verse in Mishlei (3:12) dealing with punishment teaches us a profound lesson in life: "For the L-rd chastises the one He loves, as a father placates a son." Mezudath Dovid (Ibid) explains that "the L-rd chastises the one He loves" to prod him to straighten his way.

### VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

#### Basic Training

To become a certified lifeguard, Shaul had to pass a rigorous exam. It included essential written information from his course manual detailing how to save a drowning swimmer, and a "mock drowning" in which he had to dive into a pool and perform a rescue. Even after



he passed, he was required to continue his training to keep up his skills and knowledge. Obviously, the time to prepare for a rescue was before an emergency occurred, so that when the skills were needed, they would be well honed.

Likewise, Rav Simcha Zisel (cited in Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 3, p. 237) advises: "When a person is demoralized by his afflictions, it is difficult for him to contemplate thoughts of doing *teshuvah*, since all his attention is on his pain. It is specifically *before* the suffering that it is the appropriate time to contemplate on matters and to [attempt to] improve himself."

## Try This!

► Try today to isolate one minor instance of challenge or disappointment and consciously bring yourself to accept it as an act of Hashem which you trust is, in some way, for your good.

## Did You Know

### ► Too Late?

Although the time for reading Krias Shema extends only until the end of the third hour of the day, if a person has not yet read it when the third hour has passed, he should still read it with its blessings.

He may do so during the whole of the fourth hour of the day, i.e. until a third of the day has passed. However, he will not have the reward of someone who read it in the proper time (Siman 58:6).