

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

ברנת קריאת שמע

The Angels and Us

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

May You be blessed, our Rock, our King and Redeemer, Creator of holy ones; may Your Name be praised forever, our King. Fashioner of ministering angels; all of Whose ministering angels stand at the summit of the universe and proclaim—with awe, together, loudly—the words of the living G-d and King of the universe.

תתברך צורנו מלכנו וגואלנו, בורא קדושים. ישתבח שמך לעד מלכנו, יוצר משרתים, ואשר משרתיו כלם עומדים ברום עולם, ומשמיעים ביראה יחד בקול דברי אלקים חיים ומלך עולם...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The Gemara (Avodah Zara 9a) cites a *baraisa* that the world is destined to exist for six thousand years, corresponding to the six days of creation. On the seventh day, G-d rested; likewise, the world will rest in the seventh millennium (Rashi, ibid).

end of the fourth millennium. The third two thousand years was to be the days of Mashiach. That is, the final redemption should already have ended the exile (Rashi, ibid). However, because of our many sins, although many years have passed, Mashiach has still not arrived.

The word צורנו refers to the first two thousand years in which the world was unaware of Hashem and did not recognize His Kingdom. During that time Hashem is referred to as צורנו, the Creator. The word, מלכנו, our King, refers to the second two thousand years in which the study of Torah spread. Hashem's Kingdom was recognized in the world, especially by the Jewish people. The word וגואלנו, our Redeemer, refers to the third two thousand years which are the days in which we await the final redemption, may it come speedily in our days. (Iyun Tefillah)

The first two thousand years were of nothingness in that the world was ignorant of Torah (Rashi, ibid). The second two thousand years were when the study and teaching of Torah thrived. Although the Torah continued to be studied after the fourth thousand year, Maharsha (ibid) explains that toward the end of this time, the trials and tribulations of the exile grew and the centers of Torah study declined. In fact, the last students of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, who participated in the completion of the Mishnah, died near the

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

A Job for a Human

Despite the lofty status of the angels, it is man who powers the spiritual realm.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Elevating Worlds

The beginning of the *birchas kriyas shema* (יצר אור ובורא חשך) speaks about man's praise of Hashem, Who creates the illuminations. The paragraph above discusses the angels, referred to as משרתים and משרתיו, who praise G-d, which inspires us to praise Him (Iyun Tefillah). Tosafos (Chagigah 13b) explains that משרתים refers to special angels that are created daily for the sole purpose of saying *shirah*, song to Hashem. Once they have fulfilled their service to G-d, they no longer exist. This concept is based on the words חדשים--they are new each morning (Eichah 3:23). On the other hand, משרתיו have existed since the beginning of creation and live forever. Nefesh HaChaim (Shaar 1, Chapter 10) explains that although angels are greater than man because

angels are spiritual beings, holier in essence and are far more wondrous, in one thing man is greater.

Nefesh HaChaim concludes, "... it is he [man] who elevates and unifies the worlds and [spiritual] forces... This is not true of the angels, because an angel is appointed and assigned to a specific task by Divine Will. The angel does not incorporate all the worlds. Only man can elevate and unify the worlds [this world, called *olam asiah*, a world of deeds, and the spiritual worlds]... through his actions, because he includes an aspect from all of them. Angels are only elevated and increase their holiness through the actions of man, since man includes something from them as well."

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Moving Worlds

Imagine a spiritual MRI of a Jew. It details the many layers of the person's soul and life-force, starting with the 'animal soul' that he shares with the rest of the animal kingdom, going up to the intellectual and emotional aspects that he shares with all of humanity, capped off by the '*chelek Eloka Mimaal*', the spark of G-dliness that he shares with his fellow Jews.



The physical, the intellectual and the spiritual are all embedded and intertwined in this one creation, and he is able to traverse these levels of existence. He can take a basic animal drive like eating and turn it into a means of recognizing the Creator by reciting a blessing before

eating and *birchas hamazon* afterward (if he ate bread). He can take an intellectual pursuit like learning Torah and use it as a pathway for serving G-d. He can take a sublime feeling of holiness and bring it down to earth by performing a mitzvah.

From moment to moment, a Jew is performing acts in this world that turn the wheels of the spiritual world. He can sanctify the mundane and he can elevate the other-worldly.

Try This!

Praying is one of the ways in which a person elevates the various worlds of which he is a part. In addition, by praying, he literally draws Hashem's blessings from Heaven into the material world, which include the physical sustenance that enables us all to exist. Imagine your words of prayer reaching up into the realm of the heavens and bringing that which you request down into the world. When you say the words יוצר משרתים ואשר משרתיו, conjure up the image of the holy and wondrous angels praising Hashem, and think how you have the ability to do more than angels – you can elevate and power the spiritual realms.

Did You Know

► *Responding to Kaddish*

The Shulchan Aruch (Siman 66:3) rules that during the *birchas kriyas shema*, one may respond to *Kaddish* even in the middle of a verse. Mishneh Berurah (Ibid, 17) rules that one may respond with אמן יהא שמה רבה מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא. However, he should not recite the word יתברך. In addition, one should respond אמן after the words דאמירן בעלמא, but should not respond אמן to the verses ותקבל יהא שלמא, ותקבל יהא שלום of *Kaddish*, because it is only a custom to say them.