

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

ASHER YATZAR

Wonder of Wonders

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, **Who fashioned** man with wisdom and created within him many openings and many cavities... Blessed are You, Hashem, Who heals all flesh and acts wondrously.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו
מלך העולם אשר יצר
את האדם בחכמה וברא
בו נקבים נקבים חלולים
חלולים... ברוך אתה ה' רופא
כל בשר ומפליא לעשות:

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning



The Pasuk states that upon hearing the news from the angel that he would have a son, Manoach brought a Korban. The Pasuk continues “U’Maflī La’asos - and a wondrous thing happened,” as fire came out of a rock to consume the offering that Manoach had brought (Shoftim 13:19). The commentaries there explain that the word Maflī is rooted in the word ‘Peleh’ - an amazing and phenomenal event had just occurred - something shocking, astonishing and miraculous - fire out of a rock!! Chazal then remarkably “borrow” this two-word phrase “UMaflī La’asos,” as the conclusion and climax of the Asher Yotzar bracha, which we recite several times a day in recognition of Hashem giving us the capability to take care of our bodily needs. By using this phrase, Chazal may want us to understand that it is the same “Maflī La’asos” that Manoach and his wife witnessed as they saw fire coming out of the rock to consume a Karbon - as we witness every time we successfully take care of our bodily needs. It is a ‘Peleh’ - wondrous and extraordinary - like fire out of a rock!

Each and every time we conclude Asher Yotzar it should be with a huge acknowledgment - with a climactic recognition and blissful declaration - “UMAFLLI LAASOS!”

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Most Incredible Machine

Appreciate the wonder of the human body as an expression of Hashem’s unfathomable wisdom.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Hashem’s Chochma at Work

Man is created with “many openings and many cavities.” The *Midrash Tanchuma* notes that the numerical value of the Hebrew words “*chalulim chalulim* — cavities, cavities” is 248, which is also the number of organs in the body. If even one of the cavities, such as the heart, stomach, or intestines were ruptured; or if one of the openings, such as the mouth, nose or anus were blocked, one’s body could not function properly.

We conclude the blessing, “Blessed are You, Hashem, Who heals all flesh and acts wondrously.” Rav Yonasan Eibeshutz explains that recognizing the wisdom and wonder of the human body creates a powerful awareness of Hashem:

“One who is proficient in anatomy recognizes Hashem’s great love for man and the wisdom involved in his creation. One becomes aware all his needs are performed by different organs—some are hard while others are soft, some are dry while others are moist — and yet they work together precisely. ‘How great are Your works, Hashem, You make them all with wisdom!’

“If one would contemplate this, he would purify his heart from all iniquity, and he would insert

in his heart a love and awe of Hashem...”

People have always recognized the wisdom and wonder of technology. If you are old enough to remember the introduction of the fax machine or email, you can remember the amazement you felt the first time you were able to transmit messages instantaneously. You may remember the “Wow!” of using a touch screen for the first time, or setting out on your first voyage guided by a GPS. We marvel at man’s *chochma* (wisdom) and ingenuity when we encounter these breakthroughs in technology.

By telling us that Hashem created us with *chochma*, the “Asher Yotzar” blessing should arouse the greatest “Wow!” of all. We recite it after eliminating waste from our bodies, but even that process is only a hint of the amazing, ingenious, infinitely subtle mechanisms at work in our bodies at each and every moment of the day. When we take the opportunity of reciting this blessing to marvel at our body’s functioning, as we do over the workings of a new piece of technology, we go a long distance toward building a true awe of Hashem’s *chochma*.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

What Hands Can Do

The following is an essay written by Dr. Kenneth M. Prager, M.D. about the blessing “*Asher Yotzar*” as seen from the eyes of a doctor.

There was one unforgettable patient whose story reinforced the truth and beauty of the ‘אשר יצר’ for me forever. Josh was a 20-year-old student who sustained an unstable fracture of his third and fourth cervical vertebrae in a motor vehicle crash. He was initially totally quadriplegic but for weak flexion of his right biceps.



A long and difficult period of stabilization and rehabilitation followed....With incredible courage, hard work, and an excellent physical therapist, Josh improved day by day. In time, and after what seemed like a miracle, he was able to walk slowly with a leg brace and a cane.

But Josh continued to require intermittent catheterization..... The urologists were very

pessimistic about his chances for not requiring catheterization. They had not seen this occur after a spinal cord injury of this severity.

Then the impossible happened. I was there the day Josh no longer required a urinary catheter. I thought of Abaye’s ‘אשר יצר’ prayer. Pointing out that I could not imagine a more meaningful scenario for its recitation, I suggested to Josh, who was a yeshiva graduate, that he say the prayer. He agreed. As he recited the ancient bracha, tears welled in my eyes.

Josh is my son.

Try This!

► This week, each time I have occasion to say “Asher Yotzar,” I will bring to mind this powerful promise quoted in a letter from HaRav Chaim Kanievsky:

“The Sefer Seder Hayom already wrote ‘Recite the blessing with kavannah and say it word for word ... and [the result will be] that one will not need doctors and medication.’”

Did You Know

► *When to Say ‘Asher Yotzar’*

During the day, after relieving oneself, one must wash his hands and recite the blessing, אשר יצר immediately (Mishneh Berurah 165:2), to praise Hashem for his wondrous creation of the human body. *B’dieved*, he may recite it until he feels the urge to go to the bathroom again (Mishneh Berurah 7:1). By reciting אשר יצר we acknowledge that the delicate balance of the organs in our body is a miracle, as is the human being’s unique fusion of the spiritual soul with the physical body.