

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

Proof of Greatness

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem...the great, mighty, and awesome G-d, the supreme G-d, Who bestows beneficial kindness and is the owner of everything...

ברוך אתה ה'... הא-ל
הגדול הגבור והנורא,
א-ל עליון, גומל חסדים
טובים וקונה הכל...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



הא-ל, G-d-Refers to Hashem's All-Powerful Mercy.

א-ל עליון, the supreme G-d - Hashem is so exalted that He is far beyond the comprehension of even the holiest angels. We can understand Him only superficially, by studying His deeds, i.e., that He bestows beneficial kindness (Siach Yitzchak).

גומל חסדים טובים, Who bestows beneficial kindnesses - Although Hashem is supreme and exalted, He nevertheless bestows never-ending kindnesses on even the smallest creatures in the world. The kindness of Hashem, Who can foresee all the consequences of His actions, is completely beneficial and greater than that of any human being (Abudraham, page 94).

וקונה הכל, And is the owner of everything - The entire world is Hashem's by virtue of His creating and maintaining it with kindness. Everything in this world testifies that Hashem created it, and has the ability to teach us His benevolence, charity, and favor (Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 4, page 64).

הגדול, Great - Refers to Hashem's greatness in acts of *chesed*. He proclaims His presence in this world by performing acts of benevolence.

הגבור, Mighty - Refers to the incomparable power of Hashem's judgment, for He proclaims His presence in this world by meting out perfect justice. The vastness of Hashem's might is glimpsed in the trembling we experience from just one moment of an earthquake or tornado.

הנורא, Awesome - Only Hashem is to be feared for his awesome power, for no other creature or creation has any power to act without Hashem's express permission. (Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah by Rabbi Meyer Birnbaum). Alternatively, Hashem is נורא in that He proclaims His presence through truth and beauty (Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 4, page 64).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Where Greatness Lies

Hashem's might and awesomeness are proven through His dealings with the Jewish people.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Restoring the Missing Words

The Gemara (Yoma 69b) teaches that when the Men of the Great Assembly included in Shemoneh Esrei the attribute הא-ל הגדול הגבור והנורא, "the great, mighty and awesome G-d," they restored the crown of G-d's glory to its original luster. Originally, when Moshe Rabbeinu spoke to the Jewish people (Devarim 10:17), he called Hashem "...the great, mighty and awesome G-d." But Yirmiyah removed the mention of נורא, awesomeness, when he observed Israel's conquerors irreverently desecrating the Temple Sanctuary. Then Daniel removed גבור, mighty, because the Babylonians were able to enslave Hashem's children for 70 years.

But then the Men of the Great Assembly reinstated mention of הגבור והנורא in the Shemoneh Esrei. They said that this is Hashem's magnificent display of גבורה, for He shows a long-suffering tolerance to the wicked by not punishing them despite the numerous oppressions they decree against His people. And there are indeed the great displays of Hashem's

נורא, because how could one solitary nation survive among the nations of the world who constantly gather to destroy the Jewish people?

Rav Yaakov Emden, in the introduction to his *siddur*, notes the miraculous nature of Jewish survival.

"One who thinks about the fact that we are standing in exile and cling to G-d between nations who persecute us and cause us trouble, recognizes the great wonder that we have survived since the destruction of the Holy Temple until today."

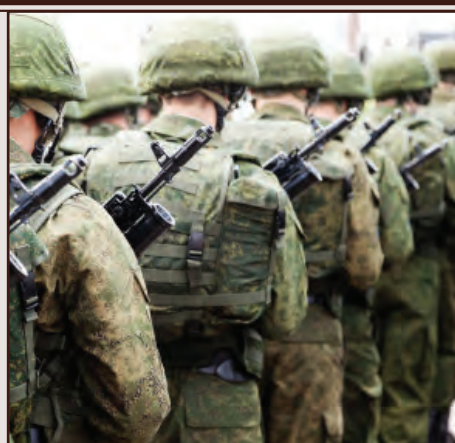
The secret of our survival is G-d's involvement in the daily lives of the Jewish people. G-d promised Avraham (Bereishis 12:2): "And I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great ..." Despite persecution, the realization of this promise throughout history is clear proof of Hashem's Divine guidance.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Through Thick and Thin

General Smith headed an elite unit of soldiers. It was the smallest unit in the army, but its soldiers were the most select, highly trained fighters. General Smith led his army into missions that were extremely dangerous, but these missions were the missions most essential to the welfare of the nation. The soldiers suffered and sometimes even doubted the necessity of the



mission. The enemy thought this small unit with its high rate of casualties was weak and poorly led. Nevertheless, General Smith had promised his unit that, if they performed as they were trained to perform, if they obeyed their orders and kept their mission foremost in their minds,

the unit would ultimately triumph. And indeed, the unit was often pummeled, but never defeated.

Likewise, the Jewish people are a small, elite unit serving under Hashem's command. Those who attack and oppress us may believe that our losses are a sign of our General's weakness. Yet we forge onward, bound to our mission and our General, knowing that our mission is the essential mission of all time, and that the promise of triumph will be fulfilled.

Try This!

Imagine a hurricane. You are sitting inside your house, windows taped to prevent shattering, while outside, a wind roars like a train speeding down the track. You see a giant tree bending like a reed in the fierce wind. Its roots are straining to rise out of the ground and it is threatening to topple like a fallen skyscraper, right in your front yard. Imagine the sense of powerlessness you would feel at this spectacle and think of it when you say הגבור. In a similar way, visualize a picture that stirs your heart with Hashem's awesomeness and think of it when you say והנורא.

Did You Know

Acquiring Kavannah

Kavannah is one of the five essential requisites of tefillah (Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah, 4:1). To begin with, *l'chatchilah*, one must have kavannah, concentrate on the meaning of all of the words in Shemoneh Esrei (Orach Chaim, Siman 101:1). If one is unable to do so, he should have kavannah for the following (in descending order): the first blessing (*Avos*), the blessing of *Modim* (Mishnah Berurah 101:2) and the ending of each blessing in Shemoneh Esrei (*ibid*:1); the first blessing and the blessing of *Modim* (*ibid*:3); during *Avos* only (Siman 101:1).