

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

Hashem the Healer

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Heal us, Hashem—then we will be healed; save us—then we will be saved, for You are our praise. Bring complete recovery for all our ailments, for You are G-d, King, the faithful and compassionate Healer. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who heals the sick of the people of Israel.

רפאנו ה' ונרפא, הושיענו ונושעה כי תהלתנו אתה, והעלה רפואה שלמה לכל מכותינו, כי א-ל מלך רופא נאמן ורחמן אתה. ברוך אתה ה', רופא חולי עמו ישראל.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

The blessing begins with the words רפאנו ה', "Heal us, Hashem," written in plural language, even though it is based on the verse in Yirmiyahu (17:14) which is actually written in the singular voice. This teaches that each person should request that Hashem's mercy be upon all who are sick. The *Sefer Yesod Veshoresh VaAvodah* writes that a person fulfills anew the positive commandment of *veAhavta le'Rayacha komocha*, "love your friend like yourself," for every person he prays for in this blessing.

After the words רפאנו ה', we continue with the words הושיענו ונושעה, save us—then we will be saved. With these additional words, we pray that those who are now healthy will remain well. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* writes that these two, potent words ask Hashem to save us from anything that causes or brings about sickness. Chazal (Shabbos 32a) teach that a person should always ask for mercy so as not to become sick, for once one does become ill, he needs sufficient merit to deserve a cure.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Only Doctor

All healing comes from Hashem.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Hashem's Agents

This eighth blessing, which requests that Hashem heal us, follows after *Re'eh V'Anyeinu*. First we request that Hashem redeem us from everyday troubles and that He alleviate our daily hardships, which, on the surface, can lead to sickness. After that we are ready to ask Hashem for true healing by asking for Hashem's mercy (*Taz, Siman 336:1*).

By pleading for Hashem to cure the sick, we demonstrate our belief that medications and treatments are merely a vehicle through which Hashem delivers His remedy. When we go to the internist, specialist or physical therapists or take pills, medications or shots, we do so with this in mind. The two words that begin the blessing allude to this point—רפאנו ה'—Heal us Hashem (*Sefer Sifsei Chaim*). Indeed, the *gematria* (numerical equivalent) of the word *Shechinah* is 485, which is the same as the *gematria* of the words *rofei cheenom*, free healer.

Yet, if cures are sent from Heaven, why should we endeavor to consult the best doctors? Why

not just pray that Hashem heal us? The *Chidah* (*Birkei Yosef, Siman 336, Ose 1 and 4*) explains that a person is actually required to seek the best doctor available; if he does not, it appears that he holds himself to be more righteous than the pious people of previous generations who used doctors. Additionally, we go to doctors because it is prohibited to rely on a miracle. Nobody is on that lofty level in the present generation. Everyone is therefore obligated to seek medical attention when needed (*Sheilos U'Teshuvos Tzitz Eliezer, Volume 17, Section 2*).

The Vilna Gaon visited his brother, who had taken ill. When he asked him who his doctor was, his brother replied that he did not need a doctor because he relied totally on Hashem to heal him. The Vilna Gaon responded: "One may not be a ba'al bitachon only when it comes to healing. If one is consistently a ba'al bitachon in all matters, he can apply it to situations involving health as well" (Cited in *Sheilos U'Teshuvos Teshuvos V'Hanhokos, Volume 4, Choshen Mishpat, Siman 325*).

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Going to the Source

There was a terrible drought. Week after week throughout the hot summer, the sky remained sapphire blue, but the beauty of those clear, sunny days began to wane as people longed for the needed rain. Ponds dried up, local crops began wilting and the water company instituted emergency restrictions to try to conserve what little water was left. Outraged that their expensively landscaped lawns and plantings were being left to wither, a group of homeowners



sued the water company. "We demand more watering time for our property in order to preserve our investment in our landscapes," their complaint stated. But the judge, upon reviewing the case, dismissed it. "You have sued the wrong party," he remarked ruefully. "The proper defendant here is G-d."

Just as the water company is nothing more than the

vehicle through which Hashem's gift of water reaches us and becomes useable for our needs, so the medical profession is nothing more than the vehicle for Hashem's cures and remedies to enter our lives. A properly run water company might do the job more efficiently than a poorly run one. By the same token, a well-trained, talented doctor can accomplish more than a poorly trained one. Thus, while it is worthwhile to seek out the best help, we must always know that the doctor is the vehicle, not the source, of healing.

Try This!

► Imagine the heavenly power of healing as a warm, luminous beam of sunlight. As you say the רפאנו ה' blessing and name those for whom you are praying, imagine them being bathed in this warm, healing light.

Did You Know

► *Personal Petitions*

In last week's issue, we related that there are several places throughout the *Shemoneh Esrei* in which one may insert personal requests: in each of the middle blessings, in the *berachah* of *Shema Koleinu* or in *Elokai Netzor*.

Middle Blessings: This portion of the *Shemoneh Esrei* starts at the blessing "Atah chonein," the blessing for wisdom, and ends after "Es tzemach Dovid," which refers to the times of Mashiach. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Siman 119:1*) states that a person may add a personal request corresponding to any of the middle blessings; however, one should be concise in his requests (*Ibid:2; Mishnah Berurah, Ibid:12*). Thus, He may ask for mercy for someone who is ill in רפאנו ה', the blessing for health and healing.