

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

Healing Together

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



Why is this blessing the only one in Shemoneh Esrei in which we declare כי תהלתנו אתה, You are our praise? The reason is to counteract the belief that doctors have the power to heal us. We clearly and emphatically state: כי תהלתנו אתה, You are our praise, to confirm that a doctor is only G-d's messenger.

We can also impress upon our hearts the reality that Hashem is the only true source of healing by following the *Mishneh Berurah's* (*Siman 230:6*) dictate to recite a prayer before taking medication or seeing a doctor. The patient should say, "May it be Your Will, Hashem, my G-d, that this undertaking should be a cure for

me, for You are a Free Healer". Afterwards he should say "You are Blessed, Healer of the sick". In doing so, we "connect the dots" between the healer in Heaven and His tools in this world. We can grasp the assistance that comes our way, and still perceive our healing as the Divine gift it is.

In that case, it would seem that any doctor would do. However, in *Shomer Emunim* (Cited in *Ma'amar HaBitachon V'Hischazkus*, Chapter 5), a letter sent to a seriously ill patient offers this advice: "If your intention is to seek help from a doctor, make sure you search for the best one available... This is because the best doctor has much heavenly assistance, which is the cause of his success."

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

To Our Health

We ask Hashem to bring healing and salvation to all the Jewish People.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

A Stronger Plea

The *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah*, Men of the Great Assembly established the text of *Shemoneh Esrei* (*Megillah 17b-18a*). What compelled them to establish it using the plural language, i.e. ונרפא הושיענו ונושעה —"Heal us [Hashem], then we will be healed; save us and then we will be saved."? They understood the greatness of the power of praying for others.

Chasam Sofer (*Sheilos U'Teshuvos Chasam Sofer*, Orach Chaim, *Siman 166*) explains that the concept of praying for others is based on the fact that all Jews are part of the one body and soul called the Jewish nation. Therefore, the affliction of another Jew should make a person feel as if one of his own limbs is affected and that he is praying on his own behalf. This enables one Jew to pray effectively for the healing of another.

The merit of loving empathy for another Jew is so immense that the *Gemara* (*Bava Kamma 92a*) makes a startling promise to those who attain this level. It states that if a person prays for mercy on behalf of his fellow when he himself has that very same need, the person who prays is answered first.

To understand the power of this statement, consider its real-life applications:

Shmuel seeks a shidduch for his 27-year-old daughter, but he worries about his neighbor Boruch's daughter, who is also single; he prays for her to find her life's partner.

Moshe can't pay his bills, but his heart breaks for Meir, who lost his job months ago. So Moshe prays for Meir's financial recovery.

These people have overcome the innate tendency to focus on their own problems. They have made their fellows' plight their own and connected themselves to the body of the Jewish people. When they pray for their friend's salvation along with their own, the merit of their *ahavah*-laden prayers likewise affects their own salvation.

Michtav M'Eliyahu (Volume 1, page 150) concludes: "Every individual who prays for the whole community... his prayers are a thousand times more valuable in this form than if every individual had merely prayed for himself. In this way each prayer is purer, because it is devoid of selfish interest, and communal spirit is fostered."

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Always Close to Home

At 10:05 p.m., the phone rang, disturbing Tova's blissful moment of dropping off to sleep early after a particularly grueling day. She grabbed the phone and offered a groggy "hello," tinged with just enough annoyance to let the caller know that she was not pleased. "I'm calling with a Tehillim chain call," said the caller. "It's a baby that was born prematurely a few hours ago and he's not doing well."

"Alright," Tova said. "Give me the name." She fumbled to turn on the lamp and pull a pencil and paper out of the drawer



of her night table. "They're not supposed to make calls after 10," she said to herself. "I know it's a good cause, but people are entitled to some privacy and some sleep!"

The caller gave Tova the name. Instantly, she recognized the mother as her close friend, a woman she had known since grade school. Instantly she pictured her friend's agonizing fear as her tiny newborn struggled to live. She did not just say a chapter of Tehillim

for the baby. She sat up long into the night reciting the entire sefer. She did not just pass the name along the community list; she phoned dozens of friends to organize help for the mother and her family.

When troubles hit "strangers," our level of empathy is naturally lower than it is when our own family or friends are involved. But the language of "Refaeinu Hashem" teaches us to think of every ailing member of the Jewish people as one of our own. By connecting to the reaction we have when illness strikes close to home, we can put our whole heart into the words of this communal prayer.

Try This!

▶ "Heal us, Hashem, and we will be healed." These words tell us that Hashem is the sole source of our healing, and if He grants it to us, nothing can stand in the way of our good health. If water spills on us, we will become wet. Likewise, if healing pours down upon us from Heaven, we will become cured. Think of this cause and effect when you say these words of prayer.

Did You Know

▶ **What's Needed Now**

In last week's section, we related that a person may insert personal requests in each of the middle blessings. The *Mishnah Berurah*, (*Siman 119:1*) citing the *Pri Megadim*, states that this allowance applies only for a *current* need, rather than a possible future need. For example, one may pray for the recovery of a person who is currently ill, but he cannot add a prayer in the middle blessings that a healthy individual be spared illness in the future. Similarly, only a person who is currently lacking sustenance may add a plea for a livelihood in the middle blessings; he may not, however, ask that he be provided for in the future.