



Praying WITH Passion

GIVING MORE MEANING TO OUR TEFILLAH - ONE WEEK AT A TIME **ISSUE NO. 144**

Tefillah Focus Of The Week: **שמנה עשרה** *Blessing of the Believers*

על הצדיקים ועל החסידים, ועל זקני עמך בית ישראל ועל פליטת סופריהם, ועל גרי הצדק, ועלינו, יהמו רמחידך ה' אלקינו, ותן שכר טוב לכל הבוטחים בשמך באמת, ושים חלקנו עמהם לעולם ולא נבוש כי בך בטחנו. ברוך אתה ה', משען ומבטח לצדיקים:

Insight:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Secure With Hashem

In this blessing we request of Hashem, ותן שכר טוב לכל הבוטחים בשמך באמת – and give goodly reward to all who sincerely believe in Your Name.” Dovid Hamelech teaches in *Tehillim* (32:10), “*Haboteach baHashem chesed yesovivenu*—one who trusts in Hashem is surrounded by

kindness.” Likewise, as the Navi (*Yirmiyahu* 17:7) writes, “*Boruch hagever...ve’haya Hashem mevtacho*—blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem, then Hashem will be his security.”

The conventional wisdom is that we receive reward for performing mitzvos and good deeds, such as giving charity, being kind to one another, etc. In this blessing, we request that Hashem bestow (cont. P. 2)

Meaning:

The simple translation of the prayer

On the righteous, on the devout, on the elders of Your people the Family of Israel, on the remnant of the scholars, on the righteous converts and on ourselves—may Your compassion be aroused, Hashem, our G-d, and give goodly reward to all who sincerely believe in Your Name. Put our lot with them, and may we never feel ashamed, for we trust in You. Blessed are You, Hashem, Mainstay and Assurance of the righteous.

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Merit of Bitachon

We ask that Hashem cast our lot with those who believe in Him wholeheartedly, for they have Hashem’s special protection.

Word to the Wise: Meaning within the word



In the thirteenth blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei* we pray for the welfare of the צדיקים righteous and the חסידים devout because the good that we enjoy in this world comes in their merit. As long as there are righteous people in the world, there is good and blessing (*Sefer Yaaros D’Vash*, Volume 1, *Drasha* 1).

This blessing mentions five different groups of people— צדיקים the righteous, חסידים the devout, זקני עמך בית ישראל the elders of Your people the Family of Israel, פליטת סופריהם the remnant of the scholars, and גרי הצדק the righteous converts.

The *Sefer Avudraham* notes that צדיקים are those who are meticulous in performing all of G-d’s mitzvos, having consistently and continuously fulfilled the mitzvos of the Torah. The חסידים are on a higher spiritual level than צדיקים as they do *‘lifnim mishuras hadin’*, “above the call of duty”— they do more in the area of mitzvos and good deeds than one is required (*Siddur Ha’Yavitz on Al hatzadikim*). Alternatively, חסידים refer to *ba’alei teshuvah* who, in order to avoid sins similar to those that they have committed in the past, must take on special additional precautions and fences.

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שמנה עשרה Blessing of the Believers

(INSIGHT cont.)

special reward on those who believe in His name. What is so unique about those who believe in Hashem's name that they deserve this reward? Are those who sincerely believe in Hashem's name, more so than those who perform mitzvos, worthy to a special prayer asking Hashem to place our lot with them?

The answer is that those who sincerely believe in Hashem's name are not greater than those who perform mitzvos. However, one who has trust only in Hashem, says the *Sefer Chovos Ha'vovos* (Introduction to *Shaar Ha'bitachon*) comes under Hashem's special supervision which emanates from the virtue of "bitachon," and is not bound by laws of nature and by his own merits. The *Sefer Nefesh Hachaim* (*Sha'ar* 3:12) writes concerning one who has "bitachon" only in Hashem:

"It is a great notion and a wondrous feat

to remove from himself all other wills which do not have complete mastery, and that he should establish it in his heart that Hashem is the sole force and there is no one else but Him."

Even if we do not have enough merit, even if we are not otherwise worthy, Hashem provides for us in the merit of our true *bitachon* in Him (*Lev Eliyahu*).

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Just Stick With Me

A group of campers gets lost in a deep forest. Eventually, they come upon a rugged, elderly man who says he has lived in this forest for most of his life. "I'll get you back to safety," he assures them. "Just stick with me."

Most of the campers are wary. Who is this old man and what does he know that we

can't figure out for ourselves? Two campers, however, realizing that the weather is turning threatening, night is falling and the forest is filled with bears, snakes and other grave dangers, place their faith in the old man. They are not any stronger or smarter than the other campers, but, by sticking close to their guide with complete faith that he will help them, they reach the edge of the woods. Days later, the others are rescued, half-dead with the hunger and cold.

The only merit the two campers who reached safety could claim for themselves was their faith in the old man. They knew that if they clung to him, he would lead them past the dangers to their destination. Likewise, the person who puts his faith in Hashem alone is secure in this world in a way that far exceeds the merits of his mitzvos.

Try This!

- Imagine a day in the life of a true *tzaddik*. Imagine how he rises in the morning, washes *negel vasser*, prays, makes a *blessing*, sits learning his *Gemara*, listens to other people's troubles and gives them encouragement. Imagine his warm smile, his clear, pure eyes, and imagine the incredible love of Hashem that burns in his heart. When you say ושתן ונתן שכר טוב לכל הבוטחים בשמך באמת, ושם חלקנו עמך, ask Hashem to reward those who live in such holiness and purity, and to attach our lot to theirs.

Did You Know

► Elokai Netzor

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*.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (*Siman* 122, *Se'if Katan* 8) adds that *Elokai Netzor* is an appropriate place for everyone, rich or poor, to beseech Hashem for sustenance. It is also a time for a father and mother to pray that their children develop into Torah scholars with fine character traits. This is a prayer that should be continually upon a parent's lips whenever the opportunity arises. *Yaaros Devash* (Volume 1, *Drashah* 1) observes that the recitation of *Elokai Netzor* is a most fitting place for asking Hashem for all our needs — nothing is too petty to bring to His attention. Neither is anything too large; no request, however seemingly unattainable, is ignored when accompanied by heartfelt, tearful prayer.