



Praying WITH Passion

GIVING MORE MEANING TO OUR TEFILLAH - ONE WEEK AT A TIME ISSUE NO. 14

Tefillah Focus Of The Week: **BIRCHAS HATORAH PART 2** *Of All Nations*

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך
העולם אשר בחר בנו
מכל העמים ונתן לנו את
תורתו: ברוך אתה ה', נותן
התורה

Meaning:

The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, **Who selected us** from all the peoples and gave us His Torah. Blessed are you, Hashem, Giver of the Torah.

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

Express thanks to Hashem for having chosen us as the single nation in the world to live a life of enlightenment and to enlighten the world with the holy Torah.

Insight:

Deeper meanings of the theme

What does it mean to have been chosen as the bearers of the Torah? Perhaps the most obvious meaning is that the Jewish people have been given the gift of morality – a true compass for distinguishing right from wrong. The

Gemara relates that “Hashem says, ‘I created the Evil Inclination and I created the Torah as an antidote.’” However, the greatness of Torah is not limited to its power against the evil inclination.

Chazal teach that that the angels protested Hashem’s gift of the Torah to mankind, claiming that its holiness was suited only to Divine realms. Moshe Rabbeinu was able to convince them that the Torah’s mitzvos and prohibitions were (at least on a basic level) directed to human beings; prohibitions against stealing, killing,

“...The gift of morality—a true compass for distinguishing right from wrong.”

speaking *loshon hora* and so forth were meaningless to angels, who have no inclination toward evil. Nevertheless, the angels still argued that there was no place for the holy amidst the profane.

The *Darchei Mussar* explains that Moshe (cont. P. 2)

Word to the Wise: Meaning within the meaning

We conclude Birchas HaTorah in the present tense with the words “Nosein HaTorah - the Giver of the Torah.” The Sefer Chassidim explains that the present tense is used because Hashem provides us with new opportunities, new topics, new understandings and new insights, on a daily basis. The Torah was not only given at Har Sinai more than 3,300 years ago - instead, we re-experience a new “giving of the Torah” every day as we learn, delve into, and expound upon something new. It is said that Rabbi Moshe Sherer, would urge people to take a D’var Torah that they had heard, think about it, add a thought of their own to it, and share it with someone else. In this way, they could experience a constant “giving” of the Torah - their own “Matan Torah” all the time.



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(INSIGHT cont.)

Rabbeinu was able to convince them that the Torah was as essential to life on this planet as the air we breathe, that the Torah was the final, essential element that would sustain the functioning of G-d's Creation. Not only was it necessary for our survival, but also, it was the only means by which we could draw close to G-d again when we, as fallible mortals, would inevitably stray.

Alei Shur explains that the most essential ingredient in any successful *teshuvah* program is Torah knowledge. Hashem aids us in our quest for complete *teshuvah* if we undertake a serious daily Torah study program, using the many facets of Torah knowledge to refine the many facets of our personality.

To Jews, the Torah is *mayim chayim*, refreshing, life-restoring, living waters. It is an "elixir of life" that brings healing to the world. And it is ours.

Halacha:

The *Shuchan Aruch* states that a person's

recitation of the blessings on Torah learning should express the great joy and gratitude a Jew should have for the opportunity to study G-d's words (*Mishneh Berurah, Siman 47, Se'if Katan 2*).

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

The Reiss family seemed to have a golden touch with financial matters. For generations, the family had prospered in all its ventures. Somehow, they always seemed to know when to invest, when to hold back, what properties would turn a profit and what to avoid.

One day, the elderly Mr. Reiss summoned his oldest son, Reuven. When Reuven arrived at his father's home, he found his father seated in his armchair with a folder on his lap. Mr. Reiss opened a folder and removed from it an aged, yellow batch of papers, neatly written in delicate script.

"This is letter was written 230 years ago by my great, great, great-grandfather," his father began. "This contains his secrets to business success. It is an infallible guide

"It is an infallible guide that has brought our family tremendous prosperity."

that has brought our family tremendous prosperity. I received it from my father, and now it is yours."

Reuven's awe and pride at receiving the "secret family formula" is the awe and pride every Jew can feel when he realizes how priceless is the wisdom he has been chosen to receive.

Take It With You:

Your personal connection to the prayer

Many great philosophers and historians have written about the impact of the Torah upon the entire world. The ideals the Western civilization holds dear – the rule of law, the dignity of human life, the value of education, charity, morality, family and communal service, all have

(cont. P. 3)

Did You Know: An insight for the week ahead.

Interruption in Torah Study

Q I recite the blessings on the Torah in the morning, learn, daven and then go to work. After a long day of work, I learn Torah again at night. This seems to be an interruption between the blessings I made in the morning and my Torah studying at night. Why do I not have to recite another blessing ?

A If one interrupts his Torah study and engages in his business, this is not ruled as an interruption, since his intention is to resume studying. Therefore, he need not repeat the blessings when he resumes. Mishneh Berurah (Siman 47:22) states that even for someone who does not usually study, we generally assume that he intends to study at any time of day in which the opportunity arises. Such a person should therefore also be lenient and refrain from saying the blessings.



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(TAKE IT WITH YOU cont.)

their roots in our Torah. No matter what political or social trends come into vogue, the Torah stands firm, providing a guidepost that cannot be swayed.

We, the Jewish people, were chosen by G-d to carry this banner through the centuries. By learning Torah, we attach ourselves to G-d, and fulfill our role of maintaining G-d's presence in the world.

Your Personal Tefillah Trainer:

Exercising mind, memory and imagination to carry kavannah into your davening

What does it mean to you to have been chosen for a life of Torah? Think of one of your favorite aspects of Jewish life – something that warms and inspires you (attaining clarity in a complex Torah concept, hearing the final shofar blast on Yom Kippur, sitting in the Sukkah, singing zemiros on Shabbos, etc.). This week, connect to that image whenever you say “asher bochar bonu m’kol ha’amim – Who selected us from among all the nations.”

Try This!

To track your progress, give yourself a check for each day you have Kavannah in the brachah of "Asher Bochar Bonu"

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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This issue includes Torah content and should be treated accordingly.