

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

'Accept Our Prayers'

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

Be favorable, Hashem, our G-d, toward Your people Israel and to their prayer and restore the service to the High of Holies of Your Temple and the fire-offerings of Israel, and accept their prayer with love and favor, and may the service of Your people Israel always be favorable to You.

רצה ה' אלקינו בעמך  
ישראל ובתפלתם, והשב את  
העבודה לדביר ביתך ואשי  
ישראל, ותפלתם באהבה  
תקבל ברצון, ותהי לרצון  
תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך.

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the word



This blessing, which is a plea for Hashem to look favorably upon us and restore the service to the *Bais Hamikdash*, is a request for communal rather than individual needs. As such, we beseech Hashem for an elevated level of acceptance of our prayer. That is why we request not only that our prayers be accepted ברצון, with favor, but באהבה, with love. This love will be expressed fully when Hashem

finally restores the service to the Holy Temple and when the light of the *Shechinah* shines upon us and draws us closer to Hashem. Finally, this blessing's three mentions of רצון, favor (...רצה), emphasize our desire that this special moment, in which we request the return to the service of the Holy Temple, become an *eis ratzon*—a time of favor when Hashem is especially receptive to our prayers (*Eitz Yosef*).

**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

*Seeking Acceptance*

We pray that our prayers find favor with Hashem, ultimately with the service of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

*Eis Ratzon*

As stated in "Word to The Wise," we request that our plea for the return to the service of the Holy Temple be an *eis ratzon*--a time of favor when Hashem is especially receptive to our prayers. This concept of propitious times for prayer is explained in the Gemara (*Berachos* 8a), and clearly, these times offer us great benefit. What then is the purpose of the times which are not an *eis ratzon*? Why can't an *eis ratzon* exist all the time?

Rav Dessler (*Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Vol. 3, pp. 206-208) explains that if Hashem were to minimize our spiritual struggles, He would be minimizing our potential as well. When difficulties beset a person and Hashem seems more distant, the purpose is to force the person to exercise his power of *bechirah*, free choice. By choosing correctly in the face of challenge, a person

arrives at higher spiritual levels and comes closer to Hashem. The obstacles Hashem poses are designed to cause the person to delve deeper into his own spiritual capacities, thereby causing him to more vigorously exercise his free will, which enables him to earn greater reward (*Sefer Sifsei Chaim — Rinas Chaim*, pp. 19). It is that effort that brings a person to fulfill his potential.

However, without the assistance of an *eis ratzon*, hopelessness might set in. By establishing an *eis ratzon* as a special time of mercy, Hashem enables a person to more easily connect with Him. If a person who feels he might falter uses these times to strengthen himself, he can find the strength to continue meeting the challenges life sets before him. Each *eis ratzon* is a gift-packaged slice of time, given to us to unwrap and put to its most exalted use.

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

*Stepping Back*

A chasid of the Kotsker Rebbe complained that every time he would feel that he was coming closer to Hashem, a new challenge would arise and throw him off course. The Rebbe asked him, "How did you teach your child to walk?"



"I stood a short distance away from him and opened my arms," said the chasid. "As he began to walk toward me, I took a small step back."

"So you see," said the Rebbe, "you moved back as your child tried to come close, but it was out of love, only so that he would learn how to walk. Hashem also steps back from us as we get close, and it is also out of love, so that that we will keep moving forward (*Joy, Prayer and Miracles — the Essence of Purim* by Rabbi Aryeh Zvi Goldman).

**Try This!**

Sometimes, Aharon would just say "yes" to his little boy. "Yes, you can have an extra candy. Yes, you can stay up a little late tonight. Yes, you can come with me to the store." But not always, for those special treats that his son adored could be used as incentives to help him mature and achieve his goals. Therefore, whenever Aharon's father bestowed a treat "just because," the child's delight was heightened.

There is nothing we desire that Hashem cannot give us. Nevertheless, everyone's life is filled with longings. Often, these voids represent Hashem's "good parenting" which is designed to prod us forward. Yet those rare moments in which the "goodies" flow into our lives are especially sweet. Think of one of those great moments, when a prayer has been answered, when you say רצה ה' אלקינו, be favorable, Hashem, our G-d.

**Did You Know**

**More on Speaking During Prayer**

We continue with a brief explanation of the *halachic* prohibitions against conversing during prayer.

A person who comes to shul and talks to others has been referred to as a *chotei u'machti es horabim*, a sinner who causes others to sin, who forfeits his portion in the World to Come (*Dovair Shalom*, page 70).

The *Aruch Hashulchan* (Siman 124:12) rules that one who talks during prayer is guilty of that severest of transgressions, *chilul Hashem*, desecrating the Name of Hashem, since this habit reinforces the perception that non-Jews are more careful than Jews to maintain proper decorum in their house of worship.