

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

נפילת אפים

Praying on Target

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

...Favor me, Hashem, for I am feeble; heal me, Hashem, for my bones shudder... for Hashem has heard the sound of my weeping. Hashem has heard **my plea**, Hashem will accept **my prayer**...

...חנני ה', כי אמלל
אני, רפאני ה', כי
נבהלו עצמי ... כי
שמע ה' קול בכי.
שמע ה' תחנוני, ה'
תפילתי יקח...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word

What is the difference between the word תחנוני, plea and תפילתי, prayer? *Meshech Chochmah*

(Bereishis 48:22) explains that there

are two different types of *tefillah*, one of which is identified as a “sword” and the other of which is called a “bow.” The sword is an instrument with inherent power. It is heavy and sharp, and will cut whatever it strikes, even if it is dropped aimlessly or is wielded with minimal strength. However, an arrow that is dropped will have little or no effect.

The sword is a metaphor for the formal *tefillah*, תפילתי, we recite every day from the *siddur*. It is the standard prayer language established

by the Men of the Great Assembly. These prayers possess inherent power (Be'ur Halacha, Siman 101, s.v. 'Yachol P'hispalet b'kol'). By speaking those words, even with minimal *kavannah*, a person satisfies—although not in the optimally effective manner—the requirement of *tefillah*.

There is also a second type of prayer which is the specific personal requests which a person makes, תחנוני. When a person prays in his own words, he is missing the power with which the Men of the Great Assembly imbued formal prayer. Therefore, his prayers are compared to an arrow. Only by exerting his own energy to draw back the bow and by focusing keenly on the arrow's destination can the archer hope to hit the target.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Powering Our Prayer

While formal prayer derives its power from the holiness of its words, personal pleas to Hashem derive their power from the intention of the heart.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Armed for Battle

In “Word to the Wise,” we explained the difference between תחנוני, my plea and תפילתי, my prayer. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 123a) explains that when Yaakov Avinu tells his son Yosef (Bereishis 48:22) “As for me, I have given you *Shechem* — one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Emorite *b'charbi u'bkashti* — with my sword and with my bow,” he was referring to the two types of *tefillah*. “*B'charbi*—my sword” — refers to formal prayer and “*b'kashti*—my bow”— refers to pleas, the personal requests that one makes.

Targum Onkelos (*ibid*) defines the word “*b'charbi*,” my sword, to mean “*b'tzilosi*,” my regular language of prayer and “*u'b'kashti*,” my bow and arrow, means “*boosi*,” my personal requests. *Meshech Chochmah* (*ibid*) explains that although Yaakov really did vanquish Shechem with military weapons, it was through his prayers that his weapons achieved success.

Yaakov's words indicate that the personal prayers that emanate from one's heart throughout the day are uniquely suited to battle our enemies. The arrow must be grasped firmly in hand and placed in the bow, which must be drawn close to the heart and released with precise aim. Likewise, personal prayer has little impact without *kavannah*, which propels it from the heart and aims it at its goal. This is included in the meaning of the Gemara (*Taanis* 8a) which teaches that prayer is not heard unless he puts his “soul into his hands.”

We, like our forefather Yaakov, must carry our military weapons into battle. No one suggests that we should abandon all logic and face our enemies unarmed. However, like Yaakov, we must understand that our “sword and bow”—*tefillah*, with its ability to arouse Hashem's aroused mercy—is the only real source of our weapons' efficacy.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Meandering

The Cohen family went bowling on Chol Hamoed. Most of the children were already old enough and strong enough to manage the large, heavy bowling balls. Each of the children in turn grasped the ball, set their eyes on the center pin, adjusted their aim and sent the ball forth with enough power for it to roll in a straight line toward its destination.



But when four-year-old Sarah took her turn, the laws of physics seemed to be suspended. Holding the ball in two hands, she walked up to the line and dropped it, providing just a touch of forward thrust. The ball began its journey down the well-oiled lane riding mostly

on the power of inertia. The family willed it to keep going as it swerved gently to the left and then back to the right, and then came to a stop just a foot before the pins.

As this little girl quickly learned, something sent off without power or aim can accomplish very little. Personal prayers need the full power of a person's heart, the full strength of his confidence in Hashem to help him, and a full focus on where his prayers are heading.

Try This!

► The archer draws back the bow. He stands far from the target, and yet, he knows he is capable of hitting it. He pauses for several moments to align himself and perfect his aim. Suddenly, in a whoosh of wind, the arrow shoots forth, and with a solid thump, pierces the center ring of the target. The archer has hit his mark!

Imagine the tense concentration of the archer, the powerful release of the arrow and his exhilaration when he hits his mark. That spirit, applied to our pleas to Hashem, evokes the emotion underlying the word תחנוני.

Did You Know

► **Women and Tachanun**

Women do not have the custom to recite *Tachanun* (*Tefillas Bas Yisrael* 2:12).