



Praying WITH Passion

GIVING MORE MEANING TO OUR TEFILLAH - ONE WEEK AT A TIME **ISSUE NO. 40**

Tefillah Focus Of The Week: **PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH: HODU** *The Gift of Mercy*

והוא רחום יכפר עון
ולא ישחית, והרבה להשיב
אפו, ולא יעיר כל חמתו.... זכר
רחמיך ה' וחסדיך...

Meaning:

The simple translation of the prayer

He, the Merciful One, is forgiving of iniquity and does not destroy; frequently, He withdraws His anger, not arousing His entire rage.... Remember Your mercies, Hashem, and Your kindnesses...

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

Indestructible

Hashem keeps His promise not to destroy the Jewish nation.

Insight:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Justice With Mercy

Throughout our long and illustrious history, Klal Yisroel has experienced great hardship and many bitter disappointments. Almost one hundred years after the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*, *Bar Kochba* led the Jews into battle against the mighty Roman Empire. After meeting with initial success – leading even Rabbi Akiva to believe that

Bar Kochba was Moshiach – *Bar Kochba* was ultimately killed, and our current *golus* continued. Indeed, there have been times in our history when the final *geulah* seemed imminent, leaving us frustrated and crushed yet again. Yet it is the extended and continual nature of this difficult *golus* that makes it unparalleled in Jewish history. Nonetheless, it has not broken us; as a people, we have endured.

A king once ruled that any subject who angered him must be punished by having an immense rock thrown at his head. One day, the king's only son raised his ire, leaving his father with a dilemma. Meting out the promised punishment would be a death sentence, and he would lose his child. However, if he did not follow through, he would be viewed as a weak ruler who did not keep his promises.

The King solved his dilemma by smashing the large rock into many small pebbles and

ordered them thrown at his son one at a time. Thus, his son remained alive, yet the king's promised punishment was carried out. (Midrash *Shocher Tov*, as cited in *Tehillim Treasury*, Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *ArtScroll* page 41.)

It is undoubtedly true that our *golus* has been long and exceedingly difficult, but we must be comforted by the fact that Hashem, the King of Kings and our loving Father in Heaven, has smashed the huge, deadly rock into smaller rocks. Though the rocks may seem heavy, they haven't destroyed the Jewish people; we have survived.

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Ready for the Challenge

The summer is about to begin, and Shlomo has just gotten a job as a lifeguard for a summer camp. It's a big responsibility, he (cont. P. 2)

Word to the Wise: Meaning within the meaning

Strict justice demands that the wrongdoing be severely punished. In what way, then, does Hashem express His Attribute of Mercy? While He must punish iniquity for which we have not repented, -- He will not destroy us.



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— PESUKEI D'ZIMRAH: HODU *The Gift of Mercy* —

(VISUALIZE cont.)

knows. Children's lives will literally depend upon his alertness and skill. Is he strong enough to swim rapidly to the rescue of a struggling swimmer? Does he have the right techniques to pull someone out of danger? Has he learned well enough how to resuscitate a victim if need be? With all these essential skills standing between a child's life and death, one thing is certain – Shlomo is prepared for his job before the first day of camp begins. This is no place for on-the-job training.

Like Shlomo, each of us has a job with

life-and-death repercussions. Our spiritual lives depend on being prepared to face the challenges Hashem gives us. **We cannot wait for the difficulties and challenges to arise** before we begin our training. We must be ready with the strength and skills we will need to avoid being swept away on a rip-tide of troubles.

Rav Simcha Zisel (Cited in Michtav M'Elياهو, Volume 3, page 237) advises us: "When a person is demoralized by his afflictions, it is difficult for him to contemplate thoughts of correcting his ways, since

all his attention is on his pain. **It is specifically before the suffering that it is the appropriate time to contemplate matters and to [attempt to] improve himself."**

Try This!

- ▶ The next time something does not go your way, rather than allowing frustration to take root, imagine the obstacle has been put there by Hashem in order to nudge you into a different direction. Imagine your life as a maze, so the roadblocks you encounter force you to pursue the path that will ultimately lead to your true goal.

Did You Know

▶ *Reliable Power*

והוא רחום is one of the most powerful prayers for Hashem's mercy. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah, Chapter 78) states that the והוא רחום prayer is also selected to begin the weekday Maariv prayer because of all the verses which express Hashem's abundant mercy. והוא רחום contains thirteen words alluding to the powerful prayer for Hashem's compassion, the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy (The World of Prayer, Rabbi Elie Munk, Page 273).

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 17b) states that after Klal Yisroel sinned with the Golden Calf, Moshe Rabbeinu attempted to learn the prayer which would assure us that Hashem will have mercy upon us. Hashem wrapped Himself in a *talis* as a *shaliach tzibbur*, a messenger of the congregation, and passed before Moshe as He recited His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. Hashem told Moshe to instruct Klal Yisroel that when they sin, they should recite the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy in the order He recited them, and He would then forgive them. Hashem promised that Klal Yisrael's prayers for mercy will never be rejected when they recite the Thirteen Attributes.