



Praying WITH Passion

GIVING MORE MEANING TO OUR TEFILLAH - ONE WEEK AT A TIME ISSUE NO. 58

Tefillah Focus Of The Week: **יהי כבוד** *The Chosen People*

...כי בחר ה' בציון, אוה למושב לו. כי יעקב בחר לו י-ה, ישראל לסגלתו. כי לא יטש ה' עמו, ונחלתו לא יעזב...

Meaning:

The simple translation of the prayer

...For G-d selected Zion, He desired it for His dwelling place. **For G-d selected Jacob as His own, Israel as His treasure.** For Hashem will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His heritage...

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

The Jewish People's Special Relationship

G-d selected Jacob as His own, Israel as His treasure.

Insight:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Choosing G-d

Many people are somewhat uncomfortable with this idea that "G-d selected Jacob as His own, Israel as His treasure." They perceive the concept of a "Chosen People" (*Am Nivchar*) to contradict the accepted Western ideal of all people being equal before G-d. To be able to counter this objection, one must understand that we were crowned with that title when we received the Torah at Mount Sinai.

When the Torah refers to the Jewish people as "chosen," it is not in any way asserting that Jews are racially superior. In fact, any person, regardless of national or racial background, can choose to accept the Torah and become part of the Jewish nation. Some of the greatest names in Jewish history - Ruth, the ancestor of King David, and Onkelos the Talmudic Sage -- were converts to Judaism.

Yet our uniqueness as the "Chosen People," actually began to take shape long before we received the Torah, in the times of Avraham Avinu. Avraham lived in a world steeped in idolatry, which he concluded was contradicted by the reality of design in nature. Avraham came to believe in G-d, and took upon

himself the mission of teaching others this monotheistic ideal. After years of enormous effort, dedication and a willingness to accept the responsibility of being G-d's representative in this world, G-d chose Abraham and his descendents to be the teachers of this monotheistic message.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky explains that it is not so much that G-d chose the Jews; it is more accurate that the Jews (through Abraham) chose G-d. Only Abraham chose to assume the mantel. If others would have shared in his mission (and they were offered the choice), they too would have joined in this special covenant which was sealed upon the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This

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Word to the Wise: Meaning within the word

The Jewish people have endured many difficulties throughout the generations. How can we be certain that although Hashem selected Jacob as His own, כי יעקב בחר לו י-ה that this relationship will endure forever? The answer is in the words of the יהי כבוד prayer.

Just as לעולם תעמוד עצת ה' the counsel of Hashem will endure forever (which is recited prior to **בחר ה' בציון**) so too G-d's selection of Jacob will also endure forever (*Iyun Tefillah*).



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יהי כבוד The Chosen People

(INSIGHT cont.)

is the meaning of Rav Saadya Gaon's famous statement that "our nation is a nation only by virtue of the Torah."

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

The Club

There's a group of students at a girls' high school who seem clearly to be the principal's favorites. They are chosen to run all the school's activities. Their opinions are sought when decisions must be made. They meet with the principal several times a day, and her door is always open to them.

The other students in the school are jealous of this group, claiming that they behave in an elitist manner. However, the only distinguishing feature of this favored group is their devotion to the school and their willingness to do whatever the principal asks in order to benefit the school and its students. In fact, anyone willing to do what those students do is automatically admitted into their group.

One can quickly perceive how the other students in the school would resent this special group of girls. They would appear to be elitist, enjoying special privileges and respect that the rest of the student body cannot obtain. In the same way, the

world may view the Jewish people as an elite club, resting on its definition as the "Chosen People" to assert its primacy among other peoples of the world. And yet, like the students in the above story, the Jewish people attain their status from one source alone – their complete devotion. We are chosen, not for privilege, but to serve Hashem. All those who join in this mission are "chosen" as well.

Try This!

- ▶ Whom do you treasure? Single out one person – spouse, child, dear friend, parent – and imagine re-uniting with this person after a long, long separation. Imagine how you would look at this person -- the profound delight and love in your eyes. Now imagine that Hashem is looking at you – a part of Klal Yisrael – in the same way. Think of this image when you say the words, "ישראל לסגלתו."

Did You Know

▶ Interrupting Pesukei D'Zimrah-End of Baruch She'Amar (cont'd)

In the prior two newsletters, we discussed that one may interrupt at certain points while in the beginning or the middle of *Boruch She'Amar*. However, while reciting the last part of *Boruch She'Amar*--בתשבות-- מלך מהלל, ברוך אתה ה' מלך מהלל בתשבות-- no interruption may be made, even to answer "amen" after any beracha (Mishneh Berurah 51:2).