

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

אשרי

Direct From Hashem's 'Hand'

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Hashem supports all the fallen ones and straightens all the bent. The eyes of all look to You with hope and You give them their food in its proper time. **You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.**

...סומך ה' לכל הנפלים, וזוקף
לכל הכפופים. עיני כל אליך
ישברו, ואתה נותן להם את אכלם
בעתו. פותח את ידך,
ומשביע לכל חי רצון.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The first verse, "Hashem supports all the fallen ones and straightens all the bent," is framed in "lashon nistar" where we address Hashem in third person. However, the second verse "עיני כל אליך ישברו ואתה נותן להם את אכלם בעתו" and "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing," is written in "lashon nochach" -- second person, where we address Hashem directly.

Chofetz Chaim explains that the "job" of providing sustenance to every creature in this world was not given to heavenly messengers (angels) to administer. Rather, Hashem Himself, in all His glory, directly provides the gift of man's sustenance (Pesachim 118a). Furthermore, "Every day, for three hours, Hashem sits and provides nourishment for the entire world -- from the tallest beast to the smallest bug" (Avodah Zara 3b). Therefore, when it comes to providing our sustenance, we address Hashem directly.

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Fulfilling Every Need

Hashem is praised for fulfilling the needs of all living creatures.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Hashem's Accounting System

The Gemara (Berachos 4b) states, "Anyone who recites *Tehilla l'Dovid* (Ashrei) three times each day is assured that he is worthy of the World to Come." What is the reason? It is because *Tehilla l'Dovid* (Psalm 145) follows the order of the *aleph beis* and contains the verse: פותח את ידך ומשביע לכל חי רצון "You open up Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."

Yet, this does not seem to reflect the reality of the world, as we see that there are some whose desires are not satisfied and who in fact go hungry.

HaRav Chaim Kanievsky explains with the following parable:

There was once a king who announced that on a certain day, all the people of his kingdom would receive ten silver coins from the king's treasure house. There was one person who owed the king taxes equal to the value of ten silver coins. The king declared that in lieu of giving him the ten silver coins, the tax debt would be forgiven. In light of that, the king proudly announced that every member of his kingdom did indeed receive ten silver coins.

There are those who "owe" Hashem because of

their sins. As the Gemara (Berachos 5a) teaches, "Afflictions purge all a person's sins." Rabbeinu Bachya (*Kad HaKemach, Bitachon, page 75*) explains: "If one suffers calamities... he should not view it as simply 'bad luck'.. Rather, he should ascribe the suffering to his many sins."

This dynamic does not always play out through extreme situations like starvation; the "debt" may also be paid little by little, through small inconveniences. The Gemara (Arachin 16b) explains even if one extended his hand into a purse to take out three coins, and only two came up, that can be considered Divine retribution that purges sin. *Maharsha* (ibid) explains that it is Hashem's kindness that such a minor irritation – the need to put one's hand back in the purse to draw out the third coin – is the means He chooses to cleanse a person from sin, bit by bit. So although it is true that פותח את ידך, ומשביע לכל חי רצון, "You open up Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing," there are those whose desires are not satisfied, since Hashem offsets their "debt" against the gifts He sends to satisfy their desires. (*Taamei Di'Kra, Tehilim 145*)

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Something for Everyone

The mother stood at her kitchen counter beginning her preparations for supper. She was making her children's favorite – hamburgers on rolls, along with a pot of vegetable soup. As she surveyed the ingredients, she marveled at the miracle of each. The sweet, pungent onion, which grows beneath the earth, invisible to the eye. The fluffy rolls,



an unlikely product of hard kernels growing on tall grass. The meat, the carrots, celery and peppers, the spices – an amazing array of sustenance, all flavored for man's palate, lay there on the counter. And outside in the back yard, the squirrels munched on acorns, rabbits nibbled clover,

the ants swarmed around some nearly invisible crumbs, the bees dined on nectar of the cherry blossom tree and the birds pecked bugs off the branches. Hashem provided the perfect food in the perfect venue for each living thing. Each of the millions of species of life, from amoeba to great white whale, survives, thrives and reproduces in exactly the location Hashem has placed them.

Try This!

► Make an effort, the next time you eat a good meal, to be mindful of the feeling of satisfaction. Savor the aroma and taste of the food and the sense of satiation that it brings. Think of that feeling the next time you say פותח את ידך, ומשביע לכל חי רצון.

Did You Know

► **Concentration is Essential**

As stated earlier, the Gemara (Berachos 4b) states, "Anyone who recites *Tehilla l'Dovid* (Ashrei) three times each day is assured that he is worthy of the World to Come" in part because *Tehilla l'Dovid* [Psalm 145] contains the verse: פותח את ידך, ומשביע לכל חי רצון "You open up Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." Therefore, it is essential to have in mind the meaning of these words while reciting them. If one did not concentrate, he must repeat from פותח את ידך until the end of Ashrei (Siman 51:7; Mishneh Berurah 51:16). This verse should be recited with great joy at the knowledge that Hashem cares for every creature (Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avodah).