

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמע


The Deed to the Land

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

...And write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. In order to **prolong your days and the days of your children upon the land** that Hashem has sworn to your ancestors to give them, like the days of the heaven on the earth.

...וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך
ובשעריך. למען ירבו
ימיכם וימי בניכם
על האדמה אשר נשבע
ה' לאבותיכם לתת להם
כימי השמים על הארץ.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The words למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה, “in order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the land,” refer to the beginning of this parsha, and it will come to pass that if you continually hearken to My commandments.” The commandments are given to ensure that your days, and the days

of your children, will be increased “on the land” which Hashem has sworn by an oath to give to your forefathers. It does not say באדמה, “in” the land. Rather, it says על האדמה, “upon the land”. That is to say that Hashem promises that fulfilling the mitzvos will cause longevity while we are *in control* of the land, not merely living in the land while it is contested by others (Rabbi Schwab on Prayer, page 362).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Staying Power

The mitzvos are the means by which the Jewish people can ensure their lasting presence in the Land of Israel, and where they can experience the ultimate closeness to Hashem.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Earning G-d's Closeness

In this section of the prayer, when we state כימי השמים על הארץ, “like the days of the heaven on the earth,” we refer to the fact that Hashem has sworn to our ancestors to give them the land of Israel forever, for as long as the heavens are upon the earth (Rabbeinu Bachya, Devarim 11:21).

In “Word to the Wise,” we explained that Hashem promises that fulfilling the mitzvos will cause longevity while we are *in control* of the land, not merely living in the land while it is contested by others. After all, fulfilling the mitzvos is in sync with what Jerusalem and the Bais HaMikdash represent to the Jewish people. The importance of Jerusalem and the Bais Hamikdash is not simply its geographical location. Rather, it signifies that there is a place in the world where “G-d lives” and is recognized. This is the place that publicizes Hashem’s greatness and the respect due to him.

The Torah (Devarim 12:1) refers to Jerusalem as “the place where G-d shall choose to rest His name”. The special uniqueness of Jerusalem lies in its status as G-d’s home. This is where His Presence is most tangible. The Bais HaMikdash was where every Jew, no matter what his situation, and could connect with G-d. G-d wanted to be next to His people and He wanted them to partake of His goodness. The Bais HaMikdash was a stunning declaration of the principle that G-d’s primary interest is not in the vast distances of space and in the millions of stars, but in man alone.

This idea is alluded to in the Torah (Shemos 25:8): “They shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell inside them.” The verse does not say, “I will dwell inside it,” but rather “inside them.” What is the meaning of this unusual phrasing? The Bais HaMikdash was such a powerful reality that it inspired the Almighty’s presence to dwell inside each and every Jew.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Brushing With Greatness

While many 20-year-old boys were content to take the easy path, Yitzchak had great ambitions. He was thrilled to find out that he had been accepted to an illustrious yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael, run by a great and revered Rosh Yeshiva. It wouldn't be easy. The level of learning was extremely high, and the talmidim learned relentlessly, creating an atmosphere in which no one would dream



of taking a day off, showing up late or going back to the dorm for a mid-day snooze. But to these select talmidim, the effort was worthwhile, for it enabled them to bask in the holiness and brilliance of the Rosh Yeshiva and his Torah. He infused his students with a fire for learning that had launched many of them into lives of true greatness. Living

up to the yeshiva's standards was difficult, but the reward was immeasurable.

Likewise, Hashem has chosen the Jewish people to be his select talmidim. The standards set by the Torah and its mitzvos require effort and persistence. However, Hashem assures us through these phrases in the Shema, that the reward is worth the effort. If we accept the challenge, we acquire the most precious gift known to man – the ability to dwell in proximity to Hashem and be inspired to reach our own greatest heights.

Try This!

► The promise of the Shema is for us and our children. Imagine literally packing up the family and going to dwell in the land that Hashem has promised us. Imagine the thrill and joy of knowing that our land is finally ready to host the *Beis Hamikdash* and house the *Shechinah*, and that we and our children have merited to return to our land to live there in peace and happiness. Think of this vision – the vision of redemption – when saying the words ימיכם וימי בניכם.

Did You Know

► **Aiming for Perfection**

Each paragraph of the Shema must be read word for word as it appears in the Torah. If a person errs in reading one of the passages and he knows where he erred (for example, if he realizes that he read the entire passage except for one of the verses in the middle), he should go back to the beginning of the verse where he erred, read that verse, and finish the passage from there. If he does not know where he erred, he must go back to the beginning of the passage and read the entire passage again. (Orach Chaim 64:1-2).

If a person reaches the word וכתבתם, and does not know whether it is the word וכתבתם of the first passage (ואהבת את ה' אלהיך) or the word וכתבתם of the second passage (והיה אם שמע), he should go back to the word וכתבתם of the first passage. However, this applies only if he did not begin saying the words למען ירבו ימיכם. Once he has begun saying the words למען ירבו ימיכם he does not need to go back to the first passage, since he can rely on the force of habit and assume that he began saying those words after he finished the second passage (Orach Chaim 64:4).

Note: Although many *siddurim* set the verse of למען ירבו ימיכם separately as a new paragraph, it is not a new paragraph as it is written in the Torah.