

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

הללוי-ה כי טוב זמרה

Help for the Humble

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Hashem encourages the humble, He lowers the wicked down to the ground. Call out to Hashem with thanks, with the harp sing to our G-d....

מעודד ענוים ה',

משפיל רשעים עדי ארץ.

ענו לה' בתודה, זמרו

לאלקינו בכנור...

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The verse states that “Hashem encourages the humble, and lowers the wicked down to the ground.” It would seem that it should have said “Hashem encourages the humble, and lowers the *haughty* down to the ground,” since the opposite of “humble” is “haughty” not “wicked.” In a very real sense, however, these two terms describe the same entity, as our Sages teach (Succah 52b).

They explain that “a man’s evil inclination threatens every day to overpower him, and seeks to kill him.” They derive this idea from the verse in Tehillim (37:32) which states, “The wicked man watches for the righteous person and seeks to slay him.” In this verse, “the

wicked man” refers to the evil inclination which attempts to entice man to sin, which in turn causes him to die (Maharsha, Succah 52b). If not for Hashem’s aid, a person would be unable to withstand the evil inclination, as indicated in the next verse (Tehillim, 37:33): “Hashem will not leave him in his hand...”

Since “Everyone of haughty heart is an abomination to Hashem” (Mishlei 16:5), the haughty person forfeits Hashem’s help and is left to thwart the evil inclination on his own. As a result, he becomes wicked, as the verse (Mishlei 16:18) states, “Before destruction comes pride, and before stumbling [comes] a haughty spirit.” (Kuntras Zichron Tzvi)

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Help for the Humble

A person who is humble receives Hashem’s help in conquering his evil inclination.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Greatness and Humility

The principle that humility leads to righteousness (see “Word to the Wise”) is expressed by the fact that the Torah was given on Mount Sinai, which is the smallest of mountains. Just as the Torah was given on this humble mountain, Torah is given to humble people. But if that is the case, should not the Torah have been given in a valley instead, which is even lower than a mountain?

Chovos Halevavos (see ‘Gates of Humility’) distinguishes between true humility and considering oneself worthless – which is not humility. Humility is something that comes after one’s recognizes his positive traits and the value of his soul—that he is a *Tzelem Elokim* (created in G-d’s image--our neshamas are invested with a spark of G-dliness) in the eyes of G-d.

Rav Chatzkel Abramsky once needed to testify in a case in which the Beis Din of London was sued by a ritual slaughterer who had been fired. As the head of the Beis Din, Rav Abramsky had no choice but to testify in secular court. His attorney asked him to state his name and his position.

The attorney then asked, “Is it true that you are the greatest living halachic authority on the European continent?” Rav Abramsky said, “Yes. That is true.” At that point the judge interjected and said, “Rabbi Abramsky, is that not rather haughty on your part? I thought that your laws and ethics teach you to be humble.” Without any hesitation, Rav Abramsky responded, “I know we are taught to be humble. But I am under oath.”

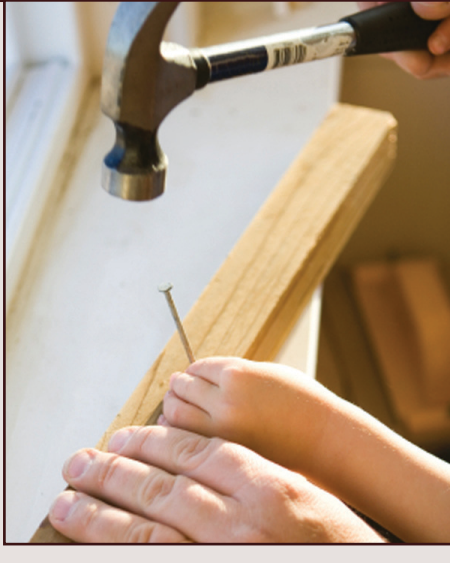
But how does one acquire humility in light of the fact that one must also recognize his own value, as a *Tzelem Elokim*? *Chovos Halevavos* (‘Gates of Humility,’ Chapter 6) explains that one way to cultivate humility is by recognizing the awesome grandeur of Hashem, His tremendous power and His exalted wisdom. When a person thinks of himself in comparison with all of mankind and all of Hashem’s creations, he realizes that he is remarkably small. He is like nothing in comparison to even the smallest of angels. These thoughts cause him to feel humble and abandon pride in any worldly wealth or possession.

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Room for Hashem

One camper struggles with his arts and crafts project. The nails won’t go in straight. The wood cracks, the paint spills. The counselor approaches and says, “Chaim, let me give you a hand.” But Chaim is insulted by the implication that he can’t make a simple little wooden bird-feeder on his own. “I can do it myself!” he thunders, seething with frustration.



The counselor sees there is no room for his assistance; Chaim appears to be too filled with ego. Eventually, Chaim throws down his tools and quits.

Meanwhile, Levi is having a tough time too. He goes to the

counselor and says, “Can you show me how to hold the nail so it goes in straight?” The counselor not only shows him that, but sticks by his side and assists him through the rough spots of the rest of the project. Levi goes home with the nicest bird-feeder in the group.

The power of humility is that it makes room in our hearts and our lives for Hashem and for other people as well. And that is what makes room for success, in both practical and spiritual matters.

Try This! ▶

Imagine the sun --- an unfathomably large, burning ball spinning though space. Now imagine that 93 million miles from that massive inferno, planet Earth, a mere fraction of the sun’s size, spins on its axis. Then imagine yourself – a tiny speck clinging to the surface of the spinning planet. Think of this scale of Creation when you say “מעודד ענוים ה” -- “Hashem encourages the humble.”

Did You Know

▶ *The Right Ending*

If after reciting *Pesukei D’Zimrah*, one realizes that he forgot to say *Baruch She’Amar*, he may still recite *Yishtabach*. Even though *l’chatchila* (before the fact), one may not recite *Pesukei D’Zimrah* without first reciting *Baruch She’Amar*, *b’dieved* (after the fact), one still recites *Yishtabach*. This situation is similar to the case in which a person forgets to recite a *beracha rishonah* before eating -- he still recites a *beracha achronah* after eating. With regard to *Pesukei D’Zimrah*, *Baruch She’Amar* is similar to the *beracha rishonah* and *Yishtabach* is analogous to the *beracha achronah*. (Beur Halacha, Siman 53:2, s.v. ‘Amar’.)

Praying With Passion is a free weekly e-mail newsletter by the author of *Praying With Fire* (Vols 1 & 2) and *Yearning With Fire*.

To sponsor an issue of *Praying With Passion*, please call: **201.837.0354** or email **info@prayingwithfire.org**