

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

הללו את ה'

Reaching for the Heavens

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Hallelu-kah. Praise Hashem from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise Him, all His angels; ... Praise Him, sun and moon; ... for He commanded and they were created.

הללוי-ה. הללו את ה'
מן השמים. הללוהו
במרומים. הללוהו כל
מלאכיו... הללוהו שמש וירח...
כי הוא צוה ונבראו.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



The Gemara (Chagigah 12b) discusses different opinions regarding the number of heavens. Rav Yehudah said there are two heavens, as the Torah says (Devarim 10:14), "Behold! To Hashem, your G-d, are the heavens and the heavens of the heavens." Raish Lakish says there are seven heavens. Ben Yehoyada (on Chagiga 12b) explains that Rav Yehudah and Raish Lakish do not really dispute that there are seven heavens. Rather, Rav Yehudah divides the seven heavens

between the astronomical heavens that can be seen, and the spiritual heavens that cannot be seen. Raish Lakish lists each one separately.

Ramban (on Bereishis 1:8) explains that the word "heavens" is used in two different ways in the account of creation. The first verse ("In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth...") speaks of the supernal heavens which contain the angels and all the spiritual entities. The subsequent reference to "heavens" refers to the astronomical heavens. (The Shottenstein Edition, Talmud Bavli, Chagiga 12b, Footnote 25.)

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Dwelling in the Heights

Because Man's spiritual origins are in the heavens, he can praise Hashem from "the heights."

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

The Balance of Heaven and Earth

How can man come to "Praise Hashem from the heavens; praise Him in the heights," as if man is standing in the heavens? Nefesh HaChaim (2:14) explains the praise of man is that he is connected from the root of his soul to the highest point in creation. The heavenly roots of man are conveyed by the Torah (Bereishis 1:26) when Hashem says, "Let us create a Man in our image after our likeness..." This teaches us that man, a "tzelem Elokim," was created in the image of G-d, as a reflection of the Divine.

The Midrash states that G-d challenged the Angels to name the creatures, but they were unable. G-d showed them that man was greater than they were, for Adam was able to name all the creatures of the world (Bereishis 2:20). The Midrash then relates that G-d asked Adam to give himself a name and Adam responded that a fitting name for himself would be Adam, "for I was created from the earth (*adama*)."

The Alter from Slabodka says this was a great insight on Adam's part. The challenge of man is to always remember that he comes from the

ground. Man can indeed achieve the highest level of spirituality. His wisdom may, in fact, be greater than that of the Angels but it can all fall apart in a moment. Man is very human and very fragile, because he came from the earth. No matter how high man soars, if he makes an erroneous move he can revert back to what he really is, *adam(a)* -- dirt. Behind all his potential and greatness man is very earthy and earthly. The wisdom of Adam was to realize this dichotomy and give himself a name by which he could never think "I am beyond sin."

As human beings, we have free will to choose. The battle for our souls is fought choice by choice, mitzvah by mitzvah. Each repetition of even a small victory over the *yetzer hora* – the *tefillah* we don't skip, the extra nibble we don't toss into our mouths, the sarcastic remark we don't say – strengthens our *yetzer tov* and elevates us. (Sefer Sifsei Chaim, Bereishis, Page 181, s.v. *Beur hadevarim*.) It is always possible to slide back to being *adam(a)* – "dirt". Therefore, we must be diligent to choose well. (Adapted from Rabbi Frand on Bereishis 5756)

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Beyond Human

There seemed to be no limits to Rabbi Bernstein's abilities. He was available to everyone, for every trouble that beset them. He could find the right doctors, find the right yeshivos, get spouses to get along and children to stay on the right path. He could be at the hospital, a wedding, a



funeral and a bris, seemingly all at the same time. His congregants wondered, was he human? How did he do it?

Rabbi Bernstein seemed to exceed human capacity because he attached himself

fully to Hashem and His Torah, with no intervening shred of ego. Therefore, he was able to draw insights and understanding from Hashem's unlimited wisdom—His Torah, and pass them on to his congregants and fellow Jews. Just as a flame does not diminish when it lights another candle, Rabbi Bernstein's "powers" were undiminished by what he did each day.

Try This!

► Think of a time when you or someone went the extra mile in order to fulfill a Torah precept, ignoring the physical impulses that tugged you in the other direction. For instance, think of a time when you went to comfort a mourner, even though it was difficult for you to overcome your fatigue and go out into the night. That feeling of exceeding your human bounds is the sense you should bring to the words **הללו את ה' מן השמים. הללוהו במרומים** for as a human, a part of you is up there with Hashem, dwelling "in the heights."

Did You Know

► Exception for Kohein or Levi

One should not interrupt in between reciting Baruch She'amar and Yishtabach. Therefore, one should not initially call up to the reading of the Torah a person who is in between reciting Baruch She'amar and Yishtabach. The exception is if he is the only Kohein or Levi present. (Mishneh Berurah 51:10)