

# FOCUS ON TEFILLAH ARCHIVE

## 1. AVOS

We refer you to *Praying with Fire* (first volume), by Rabbi Heshy Kleinman (Artscroll) or *Rav Schwab on Prayer* (Artscroll) for an excellent review of the first Bracha of Shemone Esrei. Of course, many other works on Tefillah that you may have at home or handy will assist you with additional thoughts and insights on this Bracha.

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We provide the following reminder as to the distinction between "**Ozer**" (Helper), "**U'Moshia**" (Savior), "**U'Magen**" (Shield):

- **Ozer**--a Helper, who thwarts an existing immediate danger from overpowering a person (example: you have already been attacked and the attacker is defeated);
- **Moshia**--a Savior, who cancels danger threatening to overpower a person (example: prior to his attacking, the attacker runs away);
- **Mogen**--a Shield, who prevents trouble from reaching you in the first place (example: the attacker never leaves home).

See *Michtav M'Eliyahu* 4:65 as brought in *Praying with Fire* (page 117). By recognizing and realizing that Hashem helps, saves and shields--we, very much unlike contemporary world leaders, will **recognize and feel** Hashem's protection over us in all situations and circumstances!

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The Sefer *Ali Shur* (Vol. 1 , p. 123) by HaRav Shlomo Volbe, Z'tl brings the teachings of the Sefer *Yaaros D'vash* (HaRav Yonasan Eibeshutz, Z'tl) on the brachos of Shemone Esrei. HaRav Eibeshutz teaches that the first bracha should arouse us to emulate Avrohom Avinu (after whom the bracha is named--Magen Avrohom), who recognized that Hashem is the **one and only HaKail HaGadol HaGibor VehaNora--and spread this awareness by his actions and words to others**. The Kuntres *Avodas HaTefillah* by Rabbi Meyer Birnbaum, Shlita explains further that **HaKail** refers to Hashem's All-Powerful Mercy, **HaGadol** refers to His Greatness in Acts

of Chesed, **HaGibor** refers to the incomparable power of His Judgment (we need only quiver or tremble for a moment at the recent volcano or tornado events and their aftermath), and **HaNora** teaches that Only Hashem is to be feared for his Awesome Power, for no other creature or creation has any power to act without Hashem's express permission. Then, when we conclude the bracha with the words **Magen Avrohom--to indicate that Hashem shielded Avrohom from so many dangers--and will shield us, his descendants as well--**let us have the proper Kavannah--oh how we need it now!

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The following is excerpted from the monumental Artscroll work *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, and was related by Rav Schwab at a Shiur he gave on Tefillah: "I heard a story from Rav Yosef Breuer, Z'tl, which he told about his father, my Rebbe, Rav Shlomo Zalman (Solomon) Breuer. The elder Rav Breuer was a very good friend of Rav Shimon Sofer, the Rav of Cracow, a brother of the Ksav Sofer, and a son of the Chasam Sofer. Once when the two friends met, Rav Shimon Sofer asked Rav Breuer to tell him a short 'vort' from his father-in-law, Rav Shamshon R. Hirsch. Upon which, Rav Breuer told him that Rav Hirsch would point out that while Adon Olam described the unfathomable eternity and omnipotence of Hashem, it nevertheless makes a reference to Him in a very personal way--"VeHu **Kaili, He is my G-d.**" Each person in his Tefillah says: '**I have a personal relationship with HaKadosh Baruch HU, He is my personal G-d.**' Therefore, **whenever a person says the word "Ado--i, my Master", no matter how small he thinks he is, he is averring that he is in direct contact with Hashem.** This thought is in the introduction to any individual's Iyun Tefillah, concentration on Prayer. There is nothing mystical or supernatural about it. It should be the most natural thing in the world."

Hakhel Note A: When reciting the name of Hashem, which is so often repeated in the first Bracha of Shemone Esrei, it is very important to have this warm and moving thought and feeling in mind--and hopefully remember it even as you proceed and recite Hashem's name through the rest of Shemone Esrei!

Hakhel Note B: Shlomo HaMelech teaches in Mishlei (28:20) 'Ish Emunos Rav Brachos--a trustworthy man will have many blessings. We may also interpret this to mean that one who makes many Brachos is constantly demonstrating and re-demonstrating his Emunah in Hashem, and becomes not only an Ish Emunah but an *Ish Emunos*. Chazal teach that a Bracha without 'Shem U'Malchus'--'*Hashem Elokeinu Melech HaOlam*' is not truly a Bracha. Thus, each time we recite **Hashem Elokeinu--My L-rd, Our G-d** in a bracha, we should be careful to recognize the **personal relationship that goes to the essence of our Emunah**--each and every time we recite a bracha!

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Just as the way we enter Shul is an important portal to how we will conduct ourselves there, so too, will Kavanna in the first Bracha of Shemone Esrei put us on the appropriate track for the remainder of our Meeting with Hashem in Shemone Esrei. The Tur writes in the name of his brother (Rebbi Yechiel, Z'tl) that the first Bracha has 42 words, which corresponds to Hashem's Name of 42 letters (see Kiddushin 71A). *With this, we should appreciate every words of the first Bracha for each word is an inherent part in the formation of the Sheim Hashem.* An astonishing allusion to this, is that the Bracha begins with a 'bais' (the numerical equivalent of two), and ends with a 'mem' (the numerical equivalent of 40)--adding up to 42 as well--every word and indeed every letter is permeated with Kedusha!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

We begin with the first of the Brachos--known as Avos, obviously alluding to our forefathers--each of whom, as we know, are specifically only in this bracha, and each of whom Chazal teach instituted one of the daily Tefillos (Avrohom Avinu-Shacharis, Yitzchak Avinu--Mincha, and Yaakov Avinu--Ma'ariv). However, there is a second suggested meaning to the reference of this bracha as Avos. One reason given that Mesechta Avos (the only Mesechta of 63 Mesechtos that is studied in such a formal way in preparation for Kabbalas HaTorah), is called by this name is because it contains the Avos--the cardinal principles for us to live by. This bracha as well puts the Avos--the fundamentals of our faith--in perspective for us, as it describes Hashem's relationship to K'lal Yisroel, His Greatness, His Kindness, His Awesomeness, how we have survived through His beneficence--and how we will make it through the end of days. The bracha of Avos is so essential that the Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 101:seif katan 4) uniquely rules that if one realizes before he concluded the bracha with the words Baruch Atta Hashem that he did not have Kavannah for the meaning of the words--then he can go back to the words "Elokei Avrohom, Elokei Yitzchok near the beginning of the bracha, and recite the bracha again from there even though he will be repeating Hashem's name several times (although he cannot go back to Baruch Atta Hashem at the beginning of the bracha). The Dirshu Mishna Berurah (ibid.) brings the opinion of the Chazon Ish who rules that if one had recited the words Baruch Atta Hashem at the end of the bracha, or had completed the bracha but had not begun the next bracha of Gevuros, he can think the words of the bracha in between the two brachos, and it would be considered as if he had kavannah in the bracha. [The Dirshu note adds that HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita writes that he does not believe the Mishne Berurah would agree with this ruling of the Chazon Ish.] In all events, we see **the special emphasis and tremendous need** to have kavannah in the first bracha--as evidenced by the proposed lengths we must go if *c'v* we have not done so. Accordingly, it behooves us to place special concentration on the meaning of the words we are reciting in this bracha--as we begin our privileged meeting with Our Maker known as "Shemone Esrei"--with the fundamental principles of **Avos!**

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HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, points out that the reason each one of our Avos is mentioned in the bracha is because the *Nusach* of the bracha incredibly refers back to the Pasuk (Shemos 3:6,7) in which Hashem advises Moshe at the Sneh that he has heard the cries of Bnei Yisroel in Egypt: "*Anochi Elokei Avicha Elokei Avraham, Elokei Yitzchok, VEilokei Yaakov...V'es*

*Tza'akasm Sha'amati MiPenei Nogsav...* I am the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov... and I heard their cries.... In fact, the name Yisroel is not used here--for 'Yaakov' is specifically used in the Pasuk [perhaps further indicating the pain of Galus]. We thus connect our Tefillos to the Tefillos of our forefathers in Egypt--with the similar hope that Hashem will listen to our cries as well!

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Why is it that some people can daven so quickly, are not be particularly concerned with Kavannah or how they pronounce the words, and even come late and leave early? Why do they not truly appreciate the outstanding privilege of what is truly happening--an audience with the King at each Shemone Esrei?! Why the lack of concern, why the lack of care? Some have suggested that a real reason for this is that they simply do not believe that anyone is listening. Yes, Hashem is real, and they believe in Him--but they do not believe that they prayer about to be uttered is at all meaningful to themselves, let alone K'lal Yisroel or the world. It is perhaps for this reason that at the outset of *Birkas Avos* as soon as we begin the bracha with *Baruch Atta Hashem--even before we mention that Hashem is the G-d of our fathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov--*we first impress upon ourselves the word '*Elokeinu*'--that Hashem truly is watching over us, loves us and takes care of us. Everything that follows in the next Nineteen Brachos is based upon this fact. When reciting the word *Elokeinu*, we should stop for a moment, so that we properly appreciate that everything that we are about to say really does have meaning for ourselves, for K'lal Yisroel, for the world--and even makes a mark on all worlds. Our tefillah should come alive! We should share this thought with others--helping to negate the ignorance, apathy, and feeling of unimportance of our individual Tefillos--by steering ourselves and others to a proper awareness of just how meaningful, relevant, practical, important and effective each of the individual Tefillos we recite truly are!

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Chazal teach that we cannot mention all of the praises of Hashem in our Tefillah, because we could never stop. We are, however, permitted to mention the phrase *HaKel HaGadol HaGibbor VeHanorah* because Moshe Rabbeinu himself utilized this exact phrase in the Torah itself--so that we are essentially recounting the Torah's phrase. We must realize that each one of these four extremely potent words has its important own meaning. Based upon the *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah*, the following is each word's succinct meaning

**HaKail** refers to Hashem's All-Powerful Mercy. Note: this word is so important that it is repeated again in the next phrase *Kel Elyon*!

**HaGadol** refers to His Greatness in Acts of Chesed. Hakhel Note: To appreciate the concept of *HaGadol* in a practical way, think of the fact that one reason Shabbos *HaGadol* is referred to by that name is because it demonstrates our recognition that Hashem, in His Great Kindness, empowered and enabled us to tie the Egyptian god to our bed posts in preparation of, and as a zechus to ensure, our departure from Mitzrayim forever--to *Cheirus Olam*!

**HaGibor** refers to the incomparable power of His Judgment (we need only quiver or tremble for a moment at volcano, tornado, tsunami and other ‘natural’ events and disasters and their aftermath). Chazal also teach that this term also demonstrates Hashem’s incredible power over the world, as He, throughout the course of history has allowed the lamb of K’lal Yisroel to live and thrive among the 70 wolves of nations which desire to devour it in each and every generation. In the words of Chazal: ‘*Hein, Hein Gevurosav*--this is a true demonstration of Hashem’s Gevurah’.

**HaNora** teaches that Only Hashem is to be feared for his Awesome Power, for no other creature or creation has any power to act without Hashem’s express permission. Hashem’s fearsomeness is also demonstrated by *His restraint* at the Babylonian and Roman armies, who as His mere tiny creations, destroyed each Bais Hamikdash and blasphemed Hashem in gross and horrible ways in the process. Chazal teach that: “*Hein, Hein Nora’osav*--His restraint during it all is a true demonstration of Hashem’s literally incredible *Nora’us*”.

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We conclude this week’s focus on the First Bracha of Shemone Esrei with the final words of the bracha. Hashem is the *Melech Ozer, U’Moshia U’Magen*--and ultimately, as the bracha concludes, He is the *Magen Avraham*. It would appear that although *Ozer* and *Moshia* are great gifts to us, the quality of *Magen* is the most important because it is not only the climax after *Ozer U’Moshia* but also concludes the bracha--*Magen Avraham*. We can readily understand why this is so. After all--with *Ozer*, Hashem *helps us* when we are already in the predicament, with *Moshia*, Hashem saves us as the predicament is about to unfold--but with *Magen*, Hashem shields us, i.e., does not allow the situation, event or circumstance to even occur at all. We aspire to *Magen*! The concept of *Magen* is based on Hashem’s assurance to Avrohom Avinu (Bereishis 15A)--‘*Anochi Magen Lach*--I will shield you.’ HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, brings *Shir HaShirim Rabba* (4:4) to explain the meaning of *Magen* to us in the bracha: “**Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Avraham: To you I was one shield, but to your children I will be many shields!**” This means that Hashem protected Avraham from harm and in his zechus Hashem will protect us as well! As the situation in the world around us appears precarious, and we have no clue of the plans or future plans of the politicians, the world leaders, the terrorists and those in a position to ‘push buttons’ may be, we must strive to instill special Kavannah in our closing words of the bracha: *Melech*--All Powerful King Who is concerned with our welfare--be our *Ozer*, our *Moshia*, and our *Magen*--just as You were to--and in the Zechus of--Avraham Avinu!

## **2. GEVUROS**

The second brocha of Shemone Esrei is known as the brocha of "Gevuros", for in this brocha we demonstrate HaKadosh Boruch Hu’s absolute omnipotence.

The Ritva (Taanis 2A) notes that the concept of T’chiyas HaMeisim--revival of those not alive--is mentioned four (4) times in this brocha. While T’chiyas HaMeisim is certainly unparalleled gevura--why need it be mentioned four different times within one short brocha? As we know, the Anshei K’nesses HaGadola compiled each brocha B’Ruach HaKadosh, and each word is

very literally counted and deeply meaningful. See the remarkable words of the Aruch HaShulchan (Orach Chayim 112:4,5).

Because of the strength of this question, the Ritva teaches that in fact there is no reiteration here at all. Rather, there are four separate and distinct forms of T'chiyas HaMeisim mentioned in this brocha:

FIRST: "Mechaye Meisim Ata Rav L'Hoshia" is immediately followed (in the winter months) by Morid HaGeshem, because this phase refers to Hashem's bringing us to life with **proper rain, which bring us our food and sustenance.**

SECOND: "Mechaye Meisim B'Rachamim Rabim" (which is followed by Somech Noflim) refers to people who are seriously or even deathly ill whom HaKadosh Boruch Hu brings back to life through miraculous **healing power.**

THIRD: "Melech Meimis U'Mechaye" refers to the departed **whom the Neviim (such as Eliyahu HaNavi and Elisha HaNavi) helped bring back to life, and additionally to those whom Hashem brings to life "B'Olom HaNeshomos"** (obviously this is a nistar concept).

FOURTH: "V'Neeman Ata L'Hachayos Meisim" refers to **the ultimate T'chiyas HaMeisim, which we all anxiously await.**

We see here how Hashem's greatest gevuros have always been with us, are currently with us and will in the future be with us, as well.

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HaRav Schwab, Z'tl teaches (*Rav Schwab on Prayer*, Artscroll, p.424) that Tachiyas Hameisim **is the ultimate yeshua**--and accordingly at the end of the bracha, we recite that Hashem is *Matzmiach Yeshua*. He writes that HaRav Shimshon Refoel Hirsch, Z'tl explains that the root of *yeshua* is *yesh*--which means 'something' or 'existence'--and is meant to convey that HaKadosh Baruch Hu grants everlasting existence to those who merit it--**based on their Emunah and conviction during their lifetime that Yesh Tachiyas Hameisim Min HaTorah.** The *Sefer Ya'aros Devash* adds that one should await this **BeTachlis HaSimcha**--for at this time man will be brought to his Shleimus--fully and yes, finally realizing his potential! Have the Kavannah--it really makes the difference!

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The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* by Rabbi Meyer Birnbaum, Shlita helps us understand that when we recite that Hashem is a **Someich Noflim** we mean that not only does He support those who have physically fallen, but also those whose spirit has fallen or who are down financially. **Rofeh Cholim** then refers to Hashem's healing of those who are sick with all kinds of ailments--including those to which doctors may have thrown their hands up. **Matir Asurim** teaches that Hashem helps those who may be bound in all kinds of ways--limbs which are now able to move and then remarkably sit up after having been in a lying position for hours, a child out of its

mother's womb, a person out of jail, a person assisted to freedom from improper passions, a single person released from his status--by getting married! The bracha of Gevuros then **is so wonderfully encompassing**--we should not let it get by us so easily as we move from the first Bracha of Shemone Esrei to the upcoming great Brachos of personal requests!

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We bring especial attention to the **second bracha of Gevuros in Shemone Esrei--during which we should take relief, pleasure and pride--and gain serenity**--with the knowledge that awareness that Hashem is in complete control of the World--and every part of its existence.

----- **SECOND SET** -----

Chazal (Megillah 17B) teach that our recitation of the Second Bracha of Shemone Esrei (known as *Gevuros*-- Hashem's Omnipotence) is based on the Pasuk (Tehillim 29:1): "*Havu LaHashem Kavod VeOz*--render to Hashem **honor** and **might**." HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains that this means that by referring to Hashem's Omnipotence, we are honoring Him. He adds, however, that we must understand what Omnipotence really means. Hashem's Power cannot be explained in terms of a mortal's power or prowess, as when two people, groups or even countries are engaged in battle and one bests the other. Rather, because Hashem is the Source of all strength, power and influence in the world, there is simply no one that can stand up to Him that he must defeat. After all, is a man who steps on a fly considered a *Gibor*? Indeed, as we noted in the definition of HaGibor in the First bracha of Shemone Esrei, Hashem's restraint against the nations who seek to destroy K'lal Yisroel, is a demonstration of Hashem's Omnipotence--allowing His *Middas HaChesed* to supersede His *Middas HaDin*--thereby giving K'lal Yisroel more *zechusim* in *Bechira*, and giving the other nations more attempts to succeed in life. Moreover, we must remember that when Hashem displays His outward *Gevurah*, He does so in both 'natural' and 'miraculous' ways. We begin the Bracha with the words *Atta Gibor LeOlam*--Hashem's Might is not only infinite, but eternal. Hashem does not tire, and Hashem does not age. *LeOlam* also indicates that Hashem's incomparable Power manifests itself in all situations, in all circumstances and in all events. If we can properly appreciate these three opening words of this bracha--*Atta Gibor LeOlam*, then we can infuse the Brachos of Request that we are soon to make with greater sincerity and *Kavannah*, for we know with clarity and certainty that we make the requests in front of the Only One who can fulfill them!

**Hakhel Note:** One can reflect upon these three opening words every time he takes a tablet or pill, puts on a medical patch, or undergoes some other kind of therapy or treatment. It is not the oval shaped capsule that actually cures the infection, or the gray tablet that removes the arthritic pain; it is not even the exercise bike that strengthens one's knees or the dietary regimen that saves one from illness--it is, rather, Hashem Who creates the symptoms and the cures, the illnesses and the healings, Who will determine just exactly when the pain will start and when it will stop, what the side effects and after-effects of any treatment may be, and the what and why for a person staying healthy and well. This observation relates only to the *Rofeh Cholim* words of the Pasuk. Similar considerations must, of course, be made for the remainder of the bracha--

*Mechalkel Chaim B'Chesed, Someich Noflim...* Yes, most assuredly, we believe and should think about throughout the day (and at least when reciting Shemone Esrei!) that ***Atta Gibor LeOlam!***

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The Sefer *BeRumo Shel Olam* on Tefillah brings the teaching of the Sefer *Avudraham* that **Techiyas HaMeisim** is mentioned three separate times in the bracha of Gevuros--each with its own independent meaning (see also Ritva to Ta'anis 2A for a slightly different approach), as follows:

1. ***Mechayeh Meisim Atta***--this refers to our awakening in the morning after hours of sleep, which is one-sixtieth of death. It is for this reason that before we go to sleep, we actually recite the Pasuk: "***Beyadecha Afkid Ruchi Padisa Osi Hashem Kel Emes--in Your hands I put my spirit, Hashem save me...***".

2. ***Mechayeh Meisim B'Rachamim Rabim***--this refers to the rainfall and Parnassah that Hashem supplies us with in the here and now--for Chazal (Ta'anis 7A) teach that *Gadol Yom HaGeshamim Yoser Meitichiyas HaMeisim*. As the Tur writes: Just as *Techiyas HaMeisim brings life to the world*, so does rain!

3. ***V'Ne'eman Atta LeHachayos Meisim Boruch Atta Hashem Mechayeh Meisim***--this refers to the Techiyas HaMeisim of the future to which we will hopefully be zoche. Hakhel Note: We may suggest that the phrases '*Techiyas HaMeisim*' and '*Mechayeh Meisim*' are repeated in this vein, are not only so that the end of the bracha should be similar to its concluding phrase (which is a Halachic principle), but also to allude to the fact that there will be two stages of Techiyas HaMeisim--first the Tzaddikim will arise, and later all those others who are deserving.

The Sefer *Reishis Chochma* (Chapter 7) adds that the Gevurah referred to in this bracha is **Gevurah B'Chesed**--*Someich Noflim, Rofeh Cholim, Matir Assurim*, and, of course, the three kinds of *Techiyas HaMeisim* referred to above! Accordingly, when reciting this bracha, we should appreciate Hashem's ongoing love for us--as He demonstrates His caring Omnipotence in literally limitless ways!

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As we move through the bracha, we note that Hashem is *Rav LeHoshia* (great in His salvation), and that it is followed by the phrase *Mechalkel Chaim B'Chesed* (Who provides the living with Chesed). HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, points out that the term *Mechalkel Chaim* is based upon the Pasuk "*VaYechalkel Yosef Es Echav--and Yosef sustained his brothers...*" (Bereishis 47:12). We may suggest that the term '*Mechalkel*' itself is in essence a repetition of the word '*Kol*' (all) to indicate that Hashem's sustaining us is completely out of His Chesed. This is in contrast to the term *Rav LeHoshia*, in which we emphasize that Hashem's salvation of us is qualitatively great. There are, of course, other explanations of these phrases, but the point that we must make as we daven is that we *understand* Who Hashem is, and what Hashem does for us--qualitatively and quantitatively. In fact, HaRav Schwab, Z'tl, (*Rav Schwab on Prayer*,



Artscroll) translates *Mechalkel Chaim B'Chesed* as 'He provides [not only sustenance to, but actual] **life** to the living with kindness. As we continue and present practical applications of Hashem's Qualitative and Quantitative Gevurah in the bracha--*Someich Noflim* (He supports the falling), *Rofeh Cholim* (He heals the sick), and *Matir Assurim* (He releases those imprisoned or confined), we should try to visualize actual situations in our lives, or the lives of those whom we know, to which each one of these actually occurred (or for whom we hope they will occur). We add, of course, that *Someich Noflim* refers not only to those who have physically fallen to get back on their feet, but also to those who have fallen spiritually or emotionally as well. Likewise, *Rofeh Cholim* ranges from those with a common cold to those who have been previously on life support, and *Matir Assurim* ranges from those who had previously been imprisoned in Japan and in America, and extends to those who had previously been confined to bed, in a mother's womb, and those previously bound by the passions and desires of their Yetzer Hara. All of this and infinitely more is what Hashem accomplishes for us. It is no wonder, then, that the Sefer *Yesod V'Shores Ha'avodah* often repeats the phrase (and asks us to constantly contemplate): **'Gevuras Hashem! Gevuras Hashem!'**.

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We continue to review the exceptional phrases of this bracha, as instituted by the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah--with the phrase of *Mi Chamocha Ba'al Gevuros U'Mi Domeh Lach*--who is like You, Master of Strengths, and who could be compared to You? HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, points out that we use the question form so as to powerfully indicate the incomparable nature of Hashem's Power--as we do on the *Leil HaSeder*. Next, note that we now express Hashem's power in the plural--*Gevuros*, perhaps in order to refer to Hashem's Mastery *over each individual*, as well as *over the world at large*. Thus, he is able to watch over each one of us B'Hashgacha Pratis--and at the same time bring the sun out to shine everywhere, or bring rain to New York , clouds to Boston , and snow in Montreal . HaRav Schwab, Z'tl, adds that the plural use of Gevuros also serves to incorporate seemingly polar opposites--as Hashem is both a *Maimis*, He takes away life and then destroys the destroyer of life (*V'Shafat Malach HaMaves*), which will result in *U'Mechayeh*, in *Techiyas HaMeisim*. His Gevurah is thus unfathomably complete. Moreover, the Gevura is further manifest by the range of *Techiyas HaMeisim*--for it includes not just putting fresh spirit into the body, but spiriting bodies which did not have proper or real burial at all and bringing them back to life as well. One may ask--if we posit that all of the Gevuros described here are Chesed, what is the Chesed in *Maimis*, being put to death? We recall the words of HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, in the bracha of Elokai Neshama, in which HaRav Chaim teaches that even those living at the time of *Techiyas HaMeisim* will pass away for an instant, in order to be zoche to a new type of life--a life that lasts forever, and it is to that *Maimis* that we can certainly refer! Finally, we recite that Hashem is a *Matzmiach Yeshuah*. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* explains that just as a seed first is absorbed and even apparently dissolved in the ground--and in the end produces an apple tree, so too, will Hashem save us from situations which previously appeared desperate or impossible. Sometimes the salvation comes slowly, and sometimes rapidly--all, of course, within Hashem's determination, and within Hashem's Power!

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HaRav Yonasan Eibishitz, Z'tl, in his Sefer *Ya'aros Devash*, writes that the bracha of Gevuros incorporates within it the Gevurah of Hashem in accepting our Teshuva--for our sins cause our souls to diminish and decay through the *tumah* created. *Kareis* is, likewise, the result of a severe sin cutting off the soul from its connection to the Above. When a person does Teshuvah, Hashem remarkably cleanses the soul of the *tumah* and/or rebuilds the soul. Thus, Hashem's acceptance of Teshuvah is in the realm of Techiyas HaMeisim as well. So, when we thank Hashem for Techiyas HaMeisim in this bracha--we are not only referring to the Techiyas HaMeisim of bodies in the future, but the Techiyas HaMeisim of our souls in the here and now! Remember--Chazal teach that *Reshaim* in this lifetime are referred to as '*Meisim*'--and *Tzaddikim* are referred to as '*Chaim*'. We have to get the message!

### **3. ATTA KADOSH**

The Bracha of Atta Kadosh teaches us that not only is Hashem Himself inherently holy, separate and distinct from all other holiness we can fathom, but also that 'Shimcha Kadosh'-- in the way Hashem conducts the affairs of the world we can discern His Holiness as well. It is for this reason that '**U'Kedoshim Bechol Yom Yehalilucha Selah**--the Malochim and the Bnei Yisroel--both of whom are Kadosh--will forever praise Him.' It is with these awesome thoughts that we conclude the Third Bracha of Shemone Esrei, now mentally aware and prepared to make our requests of Hashem!

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The following dynamic message is excerpted from the monumental Sefer *Rav Schwab on Prayer*: "Just as HaKadosh Baruch Hu is Kadosh above and not bound by His nature, He has imbued the human being with a similar power of Kedushah, that of being able to transcend his own urges and inclinations, and separate himself from them. And we thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for giving us this ability of transcending our animal urges, and thereby assuming an aspect of Kedushah, by saying, '*Baruch Atta Hashem HaKel Hakadosh.*' The name '*Kel*', Almighty, denotes the Middas Harachamim of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The greatest Rachamim that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has shown us is that He gave us the ability to become Kedoshim. And this is true even if someone has already succumbed to his desires and tasted the aveiros, and has developed a desire to do more aveiros; he still has within him the capacity for Kedushah that HaKadosh Baruch Hu granted to him, to overcome his nature, and to become a person whom the Torah can call Kadosh."

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Having just left Shavuos through which we became a Goy Kadosh, we realize that our relationship with Hashem is based solidly in and on Kedusha--and that even the seemingly physical and personal requests that we are about to begin with Atta Chonen are truly supernatural and sublime.

----- **SECOND SET** -----

HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, in the Sefer *Sifsei Chaim* cogently explains the term *Atta Kadosh* as follows: The height of human capability in Ruchniyus does not attain the level of any *Malach* in the upper worlds, and the Ruchniyus of the highest *Malach* in the upper worlds has no connection to the Ruchniyus of HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself. Thus, if we cannot perceive of the Ruchniyus of a *Malach*, then we most certainly have no perception of the Ruchniyus of Hashem--which is beyond the *Malochim*. So, the phrase *Atta Kadosh* brings home the notion that we have no *Hasaga*, no understanding at all of the Essence of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Our recognition of Hashem's Greatness and separateness leads us to *hisbatlus*, our recognition of our position in this world in relation to Hashem's Greatness. As we recite the words *Atta Kadosh*, we should be inspired with awe--from the depth, meaning, and lesson of this two-word phrase!

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The Tur (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 114) writes that there are 14 words in the bracha of *Atta Kadosh* (Nusach Ashkenaz), which correspond to the 14 words of the Pasuk in Yeshaya (6:3) "*VeKara Zeh El Zeh V'Amar Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh Hashem Tzevakos Meloh Kol Ha'aretz Kevodo*--and they called out one to the other and said Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh..." Thus, in our personal recitation of the bracha we are emulating the Kedusha that is said B'Tzibbur. The Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 125 seif katan 4) reminds us that when actually reciting the Kedusha we should have in mind that we want to be *Mekadesh Shem Shomayim* and fulfill the Pasuk of *V'Nikdashti Besoch Bnei Yisroel*. He then especially brings the Sefer *Heichalos*, which teaches that when we recite the words *Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh* [and *Baruch Hashem Bimikomo*] **our eyes should be raised towards Shomayim**, and then it is an outstanding moment of connection between us and Hashem as we do so. In fact, the Sefer *Heichalos* brings that when we lift up our eyes towards the Heavens, Hashem *kevayachol* 'looks towards us as well', and remembers our merits and hastens the Geulah. We may suggest that the 14 words of *Atta Kadosh* in our private Shemone Esrei are a great remembrance of (and, for men davening with a Minyan, preparation for) this enormous event and opportunity!

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The next phrase in the bracha is '*VeShimcha Kadosh*--and Your Name is Holy'. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains that with this phrase we express that not only is Hashem's Existence and Power elevated beyond our comprehension, but even in the ways in which we *do know* of Him (*Shimcha*--His Name), we cannot and do not know Him completely--but only to the extent of limited human understanding. We recognize, for instance, Hashem's *Rachmanus, Koach, Mishpat, Memshalah*--but only in a manner in which our finite minds can comprehend it. Even in the future, when we will look back and understand the events of our lives and of history--the Ramchal (in the Sefer *Da'as Tevunos*) writes that this understanding will nevertheless be: "*Ketipah Min HaYam HaGadol*--like a drop from a large sea." Thus, the bracha inspires within us an elevated level of awe--as we declare our inability to fathom Hashem's greatness not only in realms that we do not understand (*Atta Kadosh*)--but even in the realm of *VeShimcha Kadosh*--the ways in which Hashem reveals Himself within the very world all around us!

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The next phrase in the bracha is: “*U’Kedoshim Bechol Yom Yehalelucha Selah*--and holy ones praise You every day forever.” There is a difference of opinion among the commentaries as to whom the *Kedoshim* are--as some say we are referring to the Malochim, and some say that we are referring to K’lal Yisroel as a people [perhaps one can keep both explanations in mind!]. Whether it is, in fact, the Malochim and/or K’lal Yisroel--the next words, which describe **what the *Kedoshim* do**, is extremely telling. They:

***Bechol Yom***--every day--without fail!

***Yehalelucha***--will praise you [Note especially the rare use of the term ‘*Hallel*’ in the daily davening and certainly in the Shemone Esrei itself. Where else do you find it in Shemone Esrei?] We suggest that the term of *Hallel* is used, because it is apparently the most appropriate term for how *Kedoshim* are to express themselves to Hashem!

***Selah***--forever [Note once again the rare use of the term ‘*Selah*’ both in the daily davening and in Shemone Esrei itself. Where else do you find it in Shemone Esrei?] We suggest that the term *Selah* is meant to teach us that our recognition of Hashem’s loftiness over us will continue even in the time of greatly elevated spirit. Certainly now, then, must we recognize His Mastery over the universe, over the world--and over us!

## **4. ATTA CHONEN**

The Sefer *Olas Tamid* (by Rabbi Shmuel Hominer, Z’tl) writes that it is important for us to realize that the Bracha is in the present tense, for we must realize that Hashem heaps Da’as and Sechel upon us each and every minute in all aspects of our existence. Whatever Hashem gives us is via *Chonen*, i.e., it is a free gift and is not based upon our great Zechuyos. When we recite the word *Chaneinu* we should intensely feel our direct receipt of this precious gift as Hashem takes wisdom, insight, and understanding and *instills them within us* every hour, every minute, and every second of our existence. Oh! How we should appreciate it!

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The Sefer *Yaaros Devash* by Rebbi Yonasan Eibeshutz, Z’tl, teaches that Atta Chonen is the FIRST of our bakashos, our personal requests, because the creation of man and his distinction from all other land and sea creatures truly lies in his unparalleled capabilities in knowledge, wisdom and understanding. This is why the bracha states Atta Chonen LeAdam Da’as--for it is to man alone that these abilities were awarded, and it is *for your ability to achieve the most that you can that you pray*. During this bracha, one should especially think about his desire for success in Torah study--and that one uses his wisdom LeShaim Shomayim and for Emes. Essentially, then, you are pleading that you attain your Tachlis HaChaim. When the Moshiach comes, we will be blessed with the times of "U’malah Ha’aretz *De’ah Es Hashem* K’Mayim LaYam Mechasim"--the importance of knowledge and its proper use is so pervasive--that it is our final hope for all of mankind. As we recite these few powerful words, let us think of ourselves, our families, our friends, Bnai Yisroel, the world--asking Hashem to provide this

FIRST of all gifts to us--not because we deserve it--but because we need and want to reach our own potential, and mankind's potential--in this world, and the next!

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The Siddur *Yaveitz* writes that if a person had a special insight in his Torah study or even while at work, he should think of it during the Bracha of **Atta Chonen** and think of thanking Hashem for the endowment. HaRav Mattisyahu Salomon, Shlita, likewise points out that when one is Mechadeish something in learning, he should recognize that what he has just experienced is a gift from Hashem. We suggest, then that this Bracha be made with a high degree of Simcha and appreciation. HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z'tl, (in the monumental work *Rav Schwab on Prayer*), provides a different insight to heighten our level of appreciation for this Bracha: "Throughout the ages, each generation has inherited the knowledge of the previous one and added to it. In our times this process has proceeded very rapidly. Today, one can see in his own lifetime the rapid and momentous strides that human intelligence has made in physics, technology, computer science.... One hundred years ago people were simply not aware of certain forces in nature that have been discovered and utilized by our generation. One hundred years from now the knowledge that we possess will be considered primitive. This is an ongoing process, because HaKadosh Baruch Hu has given man the ability to rise to higher and higher levels of knowledge and understanding." Ultimately, we will attain the highest level of understanding through our closer association with Hashem!

Especially in our generation, we should have a great feeling and real Kavannah when reciting this Bracha!

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The Sefer *Baruch She'amar* (the Torah Temimah) notes that Atta Chonen is the only bracha of bakasha in Shemone Esrei that does not immediately begin directly with a request. Rather, it begins with a statement--**Atta Chonen L'Adam Da'as**--you grant a person knowledge. The Baruch She'amar writes that this may be because "Im ain da'as--Tefillah minayin--without the power of knowledge there is no initial opportunity for any Tefillah". Thus, these four words in a sense **serve as an introduction to all of the bakashos** of Shemone Esrei--clearly expressing that our power of Tefillah can only arrive through Hashem's initial gift of precious knowledge to us . **How powerful should our recitation of this bracha be!**

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The Mishna Berura to Orach Chaim 115: s.k. 1 writes that this bakasha is the *Ikar HaShieilah* that a person should ask of Hashem--**that Hashem give him the sechel and da'as yashar to shun evil and choose good**. The Sefer *Baruch SheAmar* adds that the word *Haskeil* is intended to denote not only knowledge but **success** at attaining the knowledge. We can now better understand, why, in Nusach Ashkenaz, *Haskeil* is our final request prior to concluding the Bracha--we need the success of making our intellect work for us as well!

-----**SECOND SET**-----

We begin with the words *Atta Chonen L'Adam Da'as*. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, points out that unlike all of the other brachos of *Bakasha* which begin directly with a request, this Bracha, which serves as the introduction to all the other brachos of *Bakasha*, initially begins with praise of Hashem--that he graciously (and free of charge--chinam!) bestows man with knowledge. HaRav Kanievsky explains that Da'as is even greater than Binah, in that through Da'as one can explain his thinking. The *Adam* referred to here, Rav Kanievsky continues, is a *Chochom U'Bar Ma'aleh* (see Tosfos to Sanhedrin 59A). Although Torah knowledge is not specifically requested in the Bracha, HaRav Kanievsky points out that "*Ain Da'as Elah Torah*" (Sotah 49A)--and Torah is clearly intended. Nevertheless, we may infer that because Torah is not directly referred to in the bracha, our request is also meant to include a plea that all of our actions be undertaken and completed with *sechel hayashar*--appropriate and complete presence of mind!

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HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, in the Sefer *Rinas Chaim* writes that while all of the *Bakashos* we make in Shemone Esrei are items which we need urgently--nevertheless the first *Bakasha* for a healthy and active mind is the prerequisite to all of the other *Bakashos*. Simply stated, without *sechel*, a person would not know that he should be asking Hashem for everything else that follows--nor would he know what to ask for and how to ask for it! Indeed, as the Mishna Berurah writes in his commentary on this Bracha (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 115, seif katan 1) the goal of man in life is to choose good and detest evil--and without the intellect to do so he would be lost. All of this intellect comes from One Source. Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men, emphasizes in Mishlei (3:5): "*Vi'ehl Binasecha Al Tishaein*--do not rely upon your own understanding." Truth be told, it is at first blush easier for a person to understand that his might is not his and that his money is not his than for him to understand that his wisdom comes only from Hashem as well. A person readily recognizes that a doctor is Hashem's Shaliach, and that his boss, and his customers and clients, are as well. However, it is harder for a person to fathom that his insight, his ability to understand, his reasoning and his power of association are not '*his own*'. It is for this reason that Shlomo HaMelech especially teaches that this is not the case at all--and that our own wisdom does not even serve as an addition or support to the wisdom Hashem grants us--**for all our wisdom, all our intelligence, all of our understanding comes only from Him**. We can well understand, then, why this bracha--with Kavannah--is so crucial to attaining our potential, our goals--our role--in life!

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We move now to the second phrase of the bracha: "*U'Melamed Le'enosh Binah*". Enosh was the grandson of Adom HaRishon whose generation had sunk to a very low level. Thus, Enosh represents man at a low point. Nevertheless, Hashem grants even a coarse and base man *Binah*--the ability to understand one thing from another. Indeed, if the generation of Enosh would have used the *Binah* that Hashem afforded them properly--and they did have the opportunity to do so--world history would have been forever changed. Even if we live in a generation similar to that of Enosh, we must personally endeavor to use the *Binah* that Hashem grants us properly. It is

significant that we refer to Hashem here as a *Melamed*--one who teaches. The other place in our Tefillos in which we use the term *Melamed* is, of course, *HaMelamed Torah LeAmo Yisroel*. When we picture a *Melamed*, we should envision a caring and loving teacher, meaning to instill as much understanding as he can into the seemingly indifferent student who does not properly appreciate and understand the gift that he is being given. We therefore suggest that while reciting these words, a person should especially sense his humility for being given something that he does not really deserve and does not fully appreciate. We should also feel the love of Hashem as we recite the word--*Melamed*!

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Sometimes we lose sight of just how beautifully precise the words of our Tefillah really are. The Siddur *Otzar HaTefillos* brings that (in Nusach Ashkenaz) there are seventeen words in the bracha of *Atta Chonen*, which number corresponds both to the number of times that the term *Chochom* is used in *Koheles* and the *gematria* of the word *Tov*--(it is good). Additionally, the *Otzar HaTefillos* notes that we recite *Atta Chonantanu* within the bracha (for, as Chazal explain--if we do not have *the understanding to distinguish* between Kodesh and Chol--how can we make Havdalah?) The Havdalah in the bracha is incredibly symbolized by the word *Binah* itself which is an acronym for *Besomim, Yayin, Ner, Havdala*! With all of this preciseness, we note that the verb of *Chonen*--*to please grant us for free* is used **three times** in this short bracha in order to emphasize and reemphasize that all of our knowledge, insight, perception and understanding **is an absolute gift from Hashem**. Indeed, HaRav Mattisyahu Salomon, Shlita, teaches that upon one's attaining a Torah insight, or successfully explaining a difficulty, he should exclaim: "Thank you, thank you Hashem!"

## **5. HASHIVEINU**

How fortunate we are that we think of Teshuva every day --at least three times a day--and that we can actually **ASK FOR HASHEM'S ASSISTANCE** in doing Teshuva! The Sefer *Olas Tomid* notes that both in this bracha and in the next bracha of Selach Lonu--we approach Hashem as **Avinu--asking for that extra level of mercy that a Father can grant**. Accordingly, we should be sure not to skip over the word quickly--but instead stop and recite it with the kavannah that it deserves! Rebbe Yonasan Eibenschutz, Z'tl, in the Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* writes that when reciting this bracha, a person should ask Hashem to extend 'His hand--His sharvit hazahav' to accept one's Teshuva, and plead that even if one's Teshuva is tested, Hashem will assist him the second time as well. The *Ya'aros Devash* adds the Teshuva we are being mispallel for is not only our own--but that of all of K'lal Yisroel. Let us think of our brethren--relatives and friends and those across the globe who have to be brought closer to **Avinu**--our Father--each in his own way.

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The Fifth Bracha of Shemone Esrei, *Hashiveinu* is not a broad, general call to Hashem to bring us back to Teshuva. Rather, the Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 115, seif katan 1) writes that the Bracha is **intended for each and every one of us** to ask Hashem for him to

humble and bring down his own particular Yetzer Hara, and together with it to bring down each and every member of Klal Yisroel's own unique Yetzer Hara. Indeed, the Tur (ibid.) writes that there are fifteen words in the Bracha corresponding to the fifteen words of the Posuk (Yeshaya 55:7): '**Ya'azov Rasha Darko, VeIsh Aven Machshevosav...**--Let the person who has done evil forsake his way and the sinful man his thoughts, let him return to Hashem and He will show him mercy, for Hashem is abundantly forgiving.'

Rabban Gamliel Rabanovitch, Shlita, adds that the first words of this Bracha are 'HaShiveinu Avinu LeSorasecha.' This means, he writes, that for one to indicate that he really wants to do Teshuva he must increase his Torah study. After all, if one does not know what is right and what is wrong, how do they know whether to do Teshuva or not--and how to do so? Accordingly, in an area in which one feels he is weak (such as Hilchos Brachos, Hilchos Shabbos, Hilchos Shecheinim) one should invest additional efforts to put himself on the path to Teshuva-- and this will make his Tefillah all the more meaningful--and all the more sincere!

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Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai (Avos 2:13) teaches that one's Tefillos should not be uttered as '*keva*' (routine), but rather are uttered in a tone of Tachanunim--one pleading for mercy, for the Posuk (Yoel 2:13) states 'Ki Chanun VeRachum Hu Erech Apayim... '--meaning, the Bartenura explains, **that sincere supplication immediately arouses Hashem's mercy**. Incredibly, after providing this important teaching, Rebbi Shimon concludes with the words 'VeAl Tehi Rasha Bifnei Atsmecha.' The Rambam explains that this means that a person should not be a Rasha in his own eyes, thinking that he cannot avoid doing this, or stop from doing that.... If we are to sincerely daven with Tachanunim in this Bracha for Hashem to accept our Teshuva, we must believe and, in fact, know, that we can truly act as Tzaddikim going forward in respect of any aveirah that we have fallen prey to in the past. Whether it be Shemiras HaEinayim, Shemiras HaLashon, Shemiras Kashrus, or Shemiras HaGuf VeHaNefesh, we must recite the Bracha of *HaShiveinu* with the conviction that we will be better in an area in which we have previously faltered, then sincerely plead with Hashem for his assistance, which will hopefully then be immediately answered.

The Bracha of *Hashiveinu* is extremely and pivotally important at this time--as we reach a period of the year in which the Yetzer Hara will attempt to upend us, and make us become lesser people, as we move closer to Elul and Rosh Hashana. The Parshios of this time BeHa'alochea, Shelach, Korach, Chukas... all demonstrate the foible, folly, flounder, and failure of sin. We can, we **must** take the lesson--a great place to start is with our sincere conviction and sincere supplication in the Bracha of ***Hashiveinu!***

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Chazal (Brachos 12B) teach that "*Kol HaOseh Devar Aveirah U'Mesbayeish Bo Mochlin Lo Al Kol Avonosav*--one who does an Aveirah and is ashamed of it is forgiven for his sins." When reciting **HaShiveinu** one should feel true remorse and shame for an iniquity that he knows that he has committed. Clearly, Hashem wants *our sincere feelings* for His mercy to be aroused. The



Bracha of **HaShiveinu** concludes with the unique words: "*HaRotzeh BiTeshuva*--Hashem wants, Hashem yearns for our Teshuva"--***we have to want it at least as much!***

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HaRav Schwab, Z'tl, in the monumental work *Rav Schwab on Prayer* (Artscroll), provides the following clarity for us on the words '**VeKarveinu Malkeinu LaAvodasecha**--and bring us close Hashem to your service.': "Help us to become aware that we are serving You in our Avodah. This refers both to Tefillah and the observance of Mitzvos. Here we ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu **for help in elevating our Tefillah to the level of Avodasecha**--Your service, in which we are clearly aware that we are communicating directly with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The same thing applies to Kiyum HaMitzvos, which are often performed perfunctorily without the awareness that by these acts we are fulfilling the will of HaKadosh Baruch Hu and thereby serving Him. We therefore must ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu for His help in elevating our Avodah to the level where it becomes *Avodasecha*. Rav Schwab continues: "May I suggest the following parable for this. There was a son who embezzled a huge amount of money from his father and then disappeared. After many years of not communicating with his father--during which time the son had lost all of this ill-gotten money--he tearfully telephoned his father begging for forgiveness and for permission to return home. The father, having compassion for his long-lost son, readily welcomed him back. However, said the son, "Unfortunately, I am penniless, Dad, so could you please send me a ticket to come home?" Similarly, we too are asking HaKadosh Baruch Hu for help in coming 'back home' to Him. We want to make our Torah and Tefillah meaningful and come close to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, but we need help from Him to bring us back. We cannot do it on our own. **Hakhel Note:** With the powerful three words of **VeKarveinu Malkeinu LaAvodasecha**, we cry out for help and draw closer to Hashem--as we ask Hashem to draw closer to us!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

As we draw closer to Rosh Hashana, we are aptly reminded about the need to do Teshuvah! We begin with the plea of "*Hashiveinu Avinu LeSorasecha*--Hashem return us to Your Torah [the basis of all Teshuvah]." The Tur (Orach Chaim 115) writes that the term '*Avinu*'--*our Father* is used here, because a father is obligated to teach his son Torah--and we ask Hashem as **our Father** to please do so. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, teaches that we specifically ask for '*Hashiveinu LeSorasecha*'--to return **to Torah**, because we were initially taught Torah in our mother's womb so that we would be able to better study the Torah once we are born (Niddah 30B). Moreover, with the term *Hashiveinu*, HaRav Kanievsky teaches, we are especially pleading for '*Hashiveinu*'--for Hashem to **return all of K'lal Yisroel** back to their knowledge of Torah. Finally, HaRav Kanievsky teaches that the order of the two brachos of *Hashiveinu* followed by *Selach Lanu* requires explanation. After all, should we not first ask for forgiveness of the past, and then to be brought back to Torah for the future. The explanation may be, he concludes, that when we return to Torah--Hashem will forgive us!

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A. From a reader: "I heard from Rabbi Paysach Krohn, Shlita, that all Nusachos have the same word-for-word Nusach for this bracha, Ashkenaz, Sefard, Sefaradi, Ari, Teimani, etc., and that this is the only Bracha in Shemone Esrei for which this holds true." Hakhel Note: Astounding, Absolutely Astounding!

B. We continue the bracha with the words *V'Karveinu Malkeinu La'Avodasecha*. The term *Malkeinu* here is in contrast to the term *Avinu* in the first phrase of the Bracha. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that Rebbi Akiva established the Nusach of *Avinu Malkeinu* and that his prayers were answered with this Nusach (Ta'anis 25B). Accordingly, we continue in the same manner with *Avinu* and *Malkeinu*!

C. The *Levush* comments that our Bakasha for *Teshuva* follows our Bakasha for *Binah*, because *Binah*--our understanding--causes us to reflect upon our actions and deeds--and to do Teshuvah.

D. The Tur writes that there are 15 words in the Bracha--representing the seven Reki'im (heavens), the seven spaces (six between them and one above them) and the Kisei HaKavod--for our sincere Teshuvah reaches the Kisei HaKavod itself! Let us make sure that each word in this Bracha counts for us--so that our Teshuvah reaches the highest point possible!

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The Sefer *Olas Tomid* explains that there are two types of **Avodah** referred to in the phrase *V'Karveinu Malkeinu La'Avodasecha*: (1) Our fulfillment of the entire Torah--and in this Bracha we ask that Hashem *bring us closer* to fulfillment of the entire Torah with a full heart; and (2) The Avodah of Tefillah, and we ask for Hashem to help us so that our Tefillah will originate not from our mouth--but from our heart. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, adds that the depth of the term *V'Karveinu*--bring us close--to is our request that we be brought back to our **original Avodah** of Karbonos in the Bais Hamikdash, which we painfully feel oh so far away from! In all events, whether we are serving Hashem with our Tefillos, in the Bais Hamikdash, or through our other Kiyum HaMitzvos, we always remember that we are privileged to always stand before *Malkeinu*--in the presence of our King!

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We continue with the phrase "*VeHachzireinu BiShuvah Shleimah Lefanecha*--and help us return in complete repentance before You." HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, notes that the term *Hachzireinu* is similar to the term *HaMachazir* in the bracha of *HaMachazir Shechinaso L'Tzion*. **In both cases, we are asking Hashem to bring something back to where it was originally.** In our Bracha, we acknowledge that we have distanced ourselves from Hashem through sin--and that Teshuvah will bring us back--close to Hashem--to where we were before the *chait*. Indeed, **the Mabit writes that Teshuvah means: 'Kreiva LeHashem Mei'richuk Hachait**--coming closer to Hashem after having been distanced because of a sin.' Moreover, we do not ask that Hashem assist us with minimal Teshuvah--which one may do simply to free himself of punishment--but rather we ask Hashem to help us with Teshuvah Shleimah--which is Teshuvah

so complete that he will not fall backwards again. This level of Teshuvah reaches the category of 'Lefanecha'--i.e., a Teshuvah in which Hashem Himself can testify that a person will not revert to his previous sins. Today's phrase is especially powerful for us, for Chazal teach: "**Habah L'Taheir MeSayin Oso**--of one wants to purify himself, he is assisted in doing so." With these words of *VeHachzireinu BiShuvah Shleimah Lefanecha* recited sincerely and meaningfully, we are exclaiming: "We want to purify ourselves!" Hakhel Note: *Rabbosai--Kavannah!*

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We conclude the Bracha with the words: "*Baruch Atta Hashem HaRotzeh BisShuvah*". HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, notes that we do not conclude the bracha with the term *HaMachazir BisShuvah* (Who brings us back in Teshuvah), which is the phrase immediately preceding the conclusion of the Bracha (*VeHachzirein BisShuvah*) **because Teshuvah has to begin with us**. It is indeed for this reason, he continues, that *Teshuvah* and *Selichah* are two different brachos--as **we must first accomplish repentance**, and only afterwards can we be forgiven and avoid punishment. Hashem is thus urging us to begin--so that he can help us through and complete the process. If Hashem wants us to do Teshuvah--should we not have a *Hirhur Teshuvah* in the same way?! With each undertaking to do Teshuvah in a particular Mitzvah, Middah, or in the avoidance of a particular Aveirah--we are not only bringing Nachas to ourselves forever--but to HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself for eternity as well--after all, this is the only time in all of Shemone Esrei that we find what Hashem wants! Let's get going! Hakhel Note: With the Bracha of Teshuvah, we have a wonderful opportunity, three times a day, of accomplishing our life-giving mantra: *Teshuvah BeChol Yom!*

## 6. SELACH LANU

This week, we reach the bracha of **Selicha**. In this bracha, we ask Hashem for selicha (*Selach Lanu*) and mechila (*Mechal Lanu*). HaRav Yonasan Eibenschutz, Z'tl, explains that selicha refers to the complete extinguishment of the sin, while mechila still requires yissurim. Accordingly, HaRav Eibenschutz continues, one **should sincerely plead for selicha** in this bracha--**so that his sins are forgiven without having to suffer through difficult yissurim which would cause bitul Torah or Tefillah**. As in the bracha of Hashiveinu discussed last week, we plead with the words *Selach Lanu Avinu*--asking Hashem *as our Father* to mercifully wipe away our iniquity entirely so that we can begin our lives again **without** the hurt of yissurim and **with** fresh resolve and new dedication. This bracha contains very powerful requests--and the kavana that we have should match the inherent potency of the bracha!

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The following is excerpted from the monumental work *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, the teachings of Rabbi Shimon Schwab, Z'tl: "...Boruch Attah Hashem Chanun HaMarbeh LiSloach--Blessed are you Hashem, the gracious One who pardons abundantly. *Chanun*, as opposed to *Chonein*, is the pu'al form, and means "You graciously grant the requests that are made of You." If we pray for forgiveness, HaKadosh Baruch Hu 'allows Himself to be entreated', and even adds to the forgiveness, He is *HaMarbeh L'Sloach*: He increases His forgiveness to the point that He considers the aveiros that we have done B'Shogeig to have been Zechuyos." Hakhel Note: The

more we focus on the exact wording implanted in the Shemone Esrei by the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah the more we can appreciate its explosive potency. We need not have the in depth and hidden meanings at our finger tips or on our minds--but we most definitely should have the powerful plain meaning of the words focused in on the 5-10 minute Shemone Esrei that we pray. Over the course of a day, this amounts to approximately a half hour or less of paying good attention to what you are saying--in your audience with the King of Kings . Oh, how worthwhile it is and will be o have that focus! (As to the singular importance of the 'plain meaning' of the words, see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 98, Mishna Berurah seif katan 1).

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It is important to note that this is the **only** bracha in Shemone Esrei (at least in Nusach Ashkenaz) that has the word *Ki--because* in the bracha three times. This brings to the fore Rabbi Yissocher Frand's superlative thought on Teshuva in one of his classic Teshuva Shiurim (all of his must-listen-to Teshuva Series is available through yadyechiel.org). Rabbi Frand points out that we begin our Vidui with the phrase '*Aval* Anachnu Va'Avoseinu Chatanu--*but* we and our fathers have sinned. What is the '*but*' all about in Vidui? Why is *Aval* an essential part of our Teshuva? Rabbi Frand brings that the essence of *Aval* is taken from Yosef's brothers--who upon being accused of being spies, exclaimed '*Aval* Ashaimim Anachnu...--*but we are guilty*....' The '*but*' there conveys the brothers' stark realization that all that they had done until that point was based upon excuses--But this, But that--while in real truth the test of Yosef coming to them alone should have been handled otherwise--and he should have not been thrown into the pit, nor sold into slavery. With the words *Aval* Anachnu Va'Avoseinu Chatanu we honestly convey that our sins are also based in excuses--**but** I had to look at that, **but** I had to say this, **but** I had to go there, **but** I had to eat something, **but** I didn't have time, **but** I couldn't do it.... the beginnings of Vidui are admitting the excuses--and ridding yourself of them. One should look out for the word '**but**' in anything that you are about to rationalize or justify--to make sure that you won't have to Teshuva for that '**but**'. In the Bracha of *Selach Lanu*- with the word *Ki* mentioned three times we suggest that we ask for pardon and forgiveness--BECAUSE we realize the foible of the '*but*' syndrome, and BECAUSE we recognize that Hashem is Pardoning and All-Forgiving despite the pretexts and excuses. When saying the word *Ki*--remind yourself of the '*but*'s of the past--and concomitantly plead and rejoice in the way out of the '*Aval*'s--the *Ki*'s that Hashem so graciously provides us with!

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Today's teaching is excerpted from the *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* by Rabbi Meyer Birnbaum, Shlita. The Sefer *Orchos Chaim* of the Rosh (36) writes--"What good is it to ask for Selicha in *Selach Lanu*--if one does so without having Kavanna?" Indeed, HaRav Yechezkel Sarna, Z'tl, writes that asking for forgiveness without Kavanna ridicules the concept of asking for forgiveness. On the other hand, the Sefer *Olas Tomid* concludes if one does recite *Selach Lanu* with a feeling of remorse over specific sins that he has done in the past, and with a Kabbala not to do so in the future-- then he has fulfilled the Mitzvas Asei in the Torah of Teshuva within his daily Shemone Esrei!

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The *Sifsei Chaim*, HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, asks why the two Brachos of Hashiveinu and *Selach Lanu* are not, in fact, combined as one. After all, does not Hashiveinu begin the Teshuva

process and *Selach Lanu* complete it--as two parts of one whole? HaRav Friedlander answers that Chazal specifically separated our Bracha of *Selach Lanu* in order for us to fulfill the Fifteenth Ikar HaTeshuva listed in the *Sha'arei Teshuva* (1:41-42). **The Fifteenth Ikar is Tefillah**--that one should daven to Hashem and ask for His mercy in forgiving and erasing his sins. HaRav Friedlander concludes that it is part of Hashem's incredible kindness--that He allows us to come back to Him and pray time after time with this fault and that foible, and still forgive us through our Tefillos to have our Teshuva accepted. It is for this reason that we conclude the Bracha with the words *HaMarbeh LeSeloach*--for Hashem abundantly forgives us--time and time again, and brings us to the level of Selichah, as if we had not sinned! What a daily opportunity--and we have it three times a day!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

The Machzor *Kol Bo* teaches that this bracha begins with a *Samech* and ends with a *Ches* which in Gematria totals 68--the Gematria of *Chaim*, and this is to teach that one can be forgiven for his sins in the zechus of his Torah--which is called Chaim ("*Toras Chaim*"). How exact are the Brachos of Shemone Esrei--even the first and last letter of our Bracha is especially determined to convey a message! We note that, just as in the prior Bracha of *Hashiveinu* in which the terms Avinu and Malkeinu were used in the first two phrases of the Bracha, so too, do we follow the same order again in the first two phrases of this Bracha--"*Selach Lanu Avinu Ki Chatanu, Mechal Lanu Malkeinu Ki Fashanu*. We begin with asking for *Selicha*. What is *Selicha*? HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, brings two approaches: (i) the Ramban (in this week's Parsha!, Bamidbar 14:17) writes that *Selicha* refers to Hashem dropping the punishment that was otherwise deserved; (ii) the Malbim (ibid.), however, writes that *Selicha* means the actual erasure of the sin (*mechikas hacheit*) from Hashem's records--and this is even greater than Mechilah. One final thought for today: We ask Hashem, as 'Avinu', to forgive us for our *chataim*--which are usually taken to mean unintentional sins. By this, we ask Hashem to look upon our sins--no matter how they may have originated--as unintentional--just as a father looks with a loving eye upon his children.

The Sefer *Olas Tomid* writes that one should actually express his Viduy in this Bracha--and by doing so he fulfills a Mitzvas Asei of the Torah. When expressing one's Viduy, one should have in mind two distinct thoughts: (i) that one regrets what he has done in the past, and (ii) one accepts upon himself to be careful going forward regarding this sin. The *Olas Tomid* provides specific examples to jar one's thinking: one should express his Viduy on any Bitul Torah, Lashon Hora, jealousy and the like that he has sinned with that day. Moreover, because the word *chait* really means *chisaron*, or lacking--one should express in his Viduy any Mitzvah or good practice that he has skipped over and not done, and take upon himself to be more careful with it in the future. We now continue with the next phrase of the Bracha: "*Mechal Lanu Malkeinu Ki Fashanu*--Forgive us King because we have rebelled against You." The Avudraham points out that a sin which a father may consider to be *unintentional* may leave a king with no choice but to deem it *intentional*--because after all, any infraction is *pogem* the Kavod HaMelech. Accordingly, we ask Hashem, as the King of the universe, to forgive us for these serious offenses. The term *Mechila* itself, writes HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, (in the name of the Sefer *Nachal Eshkol*) is based in the word *chalal*--meaning that we ask Hashem to weaken,

reduce and downgrade the extent of what we have done. In a related explanation, HaRav Friedlander brings the Radvaz to the effect that Mechila means a cleaning-out--we ask Hashem to clean out the aveirah, just as a pipe filled with garbage and gook is emptied out as much as possible. If we picture our aveiros for what they really are--garbage and gook--we could perhaps save ourselves many times from having to ask for the Selicha and Mechila we so importantly request in this Bracha.

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The next phrase in the Bracha is: “*Ki Mochel V’Sole’ach Atta*”. The *Eitz Yosef* points out that in the order here we now mention *Mochel* before *Sole’ach*, even though previously in the Bracha we asked for Selicha and then Mechila. The *Eitz Yosef* explains this reversal of order here as follows: We want Hashem to downgrade our intentional sins to unintentional sins because of the *Teshuvah MeYirah* that we do. When Hashem does this, He is *Mochel*--reducing the seriousness of the sin and rendering it a *shogeig*, an unintentional sin. Once we are left with the unintentional sin, then through our Teshuva we look to Hashem to be a *Sole’ach*--removing the sin completely. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, echoes this thought by explaining that we are **now describing how Hashem is not only a *Mochel*--but even a *Sole’ach***--completely eradicating the sin and its effects. HaRav Friedlander adds that the words *Mochel* and *Sole’ach* are in the *hoveh*--present tense, in order for us to emphasize that Hashem *always* conducts Himself with such Chesed--pardoning us and forgiving us--not only annually, not only monthly, not only daily--but at each and every one of our Tefillos!

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There are four brachos which ‘explain’ why we plead to Hashem for assistance: *Ki Mochel V’Sole’ach Atta*, *Ki Go’el Chazak Atta*, *Ki Kel Melech Rofei Ne’eman V’Rachaman Atta* and *Ki L’Yeshuasecha Kivinu Kol HaYom*--then in the broad-based Bracha of Shema Koleinu, we find a double emphasis on the explanation of why we come before Hashem--*Ki Kel Shom’ea Tefillos VeSachanunim Atta* and *Ki Atta Shome’a Tefillas Amecha Yisroel B’Rachamim*. Hashem, of course, needs no explanation as to why we come before Him! We should take each of these points in Davening as directed to us--to awaken us as to *why* we are standing before Hashem and making this *specific request*--and be inspired to sincerely plead our request before Him! In the context of our Bracha here--we humbly admit that we have sullied ourselves with sin--and now approach Hashem to actually clean up *the mess that we have made*--and He does so!

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We conclude the Bracha by praising Hashem as the *Chanun HaMarbeh L’Selo’ach*. HaRav Chaim Kaniesvky, Shlita, explains that the term *Chanun* means that Hashem ‘gifts’ forgiveness to us--*for free*, and is based on the Pasuk in *Yoel* (2:13): “*Ki Chanun V’Rachum Hu V’Nicham Al HaRa’ah*”. The final phrase of *HaMarbeh L’Selo’ach*--Who pardons abundantly, reminds us that not only does Hashem forgive us once or twice, but time and time again. He does not lose patience with us, nor does He ever, ever cease heeding our sincere Tefillos. This last phrase, too, is based on a Pasuk (Yeshaya 95:7) “*V’El Elokeinu Ki Yarbeh LiSeloach*”. Time after time after time, Hashem wipes out the hurtful and dangerous sin that had actually once been in existence in

this world--oh, how we must at least recognize and appreciate this Great Gift--when reciting these words!

## **7. RE'EH**

We now reach the Seventh Bracha of Shemone Esrei--**Re'eh (Na) Veanyeinu**--the bracha of Geulah! HaRav Yonasan Eibenschutz, Z'tl, in the Sefer Ya'aros Devash, provides important guidelines and guidance in this bracha. "In this Bracha, one should daven for Geulas Yisroel--not because we will then be the princes of the land and leaders of mankind, which will in fact be the case, but rather so that we can once and for all finally attain *Shlaimus* and bring an end to Chillul Hashem--**as it is permanently replaced with Kiddush Hashem**--and this is what we mean by **U'Ge'alainu Meheira LeMa'an Shemecha**. We should also have in mind that even if we are not worthy of being saved--Hashem can act through his Great Mercy by miracle--outside of and beyond teva-- to redeem us even if we are undeserving--and this is the essence of **Ki Go'el Chazak Atta**." HaRav Eibenschutz concludes that even if one did not see the Ultimate Geulah today, he must recognize and appreciate that EVERY DAY we are redeemed from enemies--some more overt, some less overt, who seek to harm, hurt and destroy us in any way they can devise--and Hashem saves us from their designs. This is why the bracha concludes in the present tense--**Go'el Yisroel--because we truly experience Geulah every day**--and should show our appreciation to Hashem for it. Indeed, it may very well be that if we properly recognize Hashem's great graciousness to us in our daily Geulos--we can be zoche Middah KeNeggad Middah to the great and final Ge'ulah--speedily and in OUR day!

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The Bais Yosef (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 115) writes that this Bracha of Geulah refers to each and every Geulah from every single Tzara that Hashem saves us from. In the *Kuntrus Avodas HaTefillah*, Rabbi Meyer Birnbaum, Shlita, explains that the first two phrases of the Bracha, in fact, refer to two different kinds of Geulah: With the phrase *Re'eh Nah V'Anyeinu* we ask Hashem for His mercy in saving us from Tzaros which **do not** come from other human beings (such as floods, financial downturns, and the like), while in *VeRiva Riveinu* we ask Hashem to help us from the Tzaros that come about through other human beings (criminals, terrorists, wars, etc.). After describing the sources, we then ask that '*U'Gealeinu MeHeira*'-- Hashem, speedily redeem us, even if we are not worthy. Thus, with the teaching of the Bais Yosef, we comprehend how all encompassing and pervasive Hashem's Koach HaGeulah really is. Through the breakdown of the *Kuntrus Avodas HaTefillah*, we learn to divide the Geulah into its parts, making each aspect of Geulah a separate request, and infusing particular meaning into the phrases of the Bracha--accompanied by a plea in all events of *Meheira*--even if we may not deserve it, please shower your mercy upon us speedily.

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HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, (in his Sefer *Rinas Chaim* on Shemone Esrei) asks a question which is essential to our understanding of this Bracha. The first word of the Bracha is *Re'eh*-- See. *Would anyone imagine that Hashem does not see us?* Everything is open and clear to Him! HaRav Friedlander answers that when the time came for Hashem to free us from Mitzrayim, the Pasuk relates: "*VaYar Elokim Es Bnei Yisroel VaYeida Elokim*--and Hashem *saw* the Bnei Yisroel, and Hashem understood." Hashem's 'seeing us' thus directly brought the Geulah.

Rather than continue to hide us away from His view in Mitzrayim, rather than continue in a manner of *Hester Panim*, Hashem determined that He would now remove the Hester Panim and draw close to His people. The rest--Yetzias Mitzrayim and all of the Nissim VeNiflaos that accompanied it thereafter is very much a part of our history and us. Now, when we ask Hashem 'Re'eh (*Nah*)', we are asking Hashem to do away with all of the difficulties, hardships and sufferings of the *Hester Panim* in our current Golus, and replace it with a glowing Hashgacha MeYuchedes of *Ha'Aras Panim*--shining upon us with His Obvious Presence. With Hester Panim, our enemies can succeed, overcome us, and even reign over us. Through Ha'Aras Panim, Hashem's Watchful Eye and Loving Presence will enlighten every aspect of our lives and it is this that we so very much strive. Accordingly, we must place real Kavannah into the first word of this Bracha--***Re'eh!***--***Please Hashem, look at us, remove the Hester Panim--and shine upon us Your Ha'Aras Panim from now and forever hereafter!***

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HaRav Schwab, Z'tl, (*Rav Schwab on Prayer*, p. 453) emphasizes that the words *U'Gealeinu Meheira LeMa'an Shemecha* does not refer to the eventual Geulah Shleimah at the time of Yemos HaMoshiach. Rather, this is a Tefillah for protection against the daily assaults, fears, apprehensions, and persecutions that our people face, whether in Eretz Yisroel or anywhere else in the world. What we refer to here in our Bracha as Geulah is the constant protection of HaKadosh Baruch Hu against our enemies while we are in Galus--the Geulah within the Galus--which the Gemara calls Aschalta D'Geulah.

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The Sefer *Avudraham* writes that the bracha begins based upon the words of Dovid Hamelech in Tehillim (25:18); "Re'eh Onyi VaAmali Ve'sa Lechol Chatosai...see my afflictions and my toil and forgive all of my sins. It is reported that the Apter Rav, Z'tl would advise people to recite this Pasuk when feeling yissurin so that the suffering would affect atonement--importantly pointing out that a person must RECOGNIZE and EXPRESS the suffering not as happenstance or c'v as part of life--but instead as a kapparah for was one's sins. Based upon the words of the *Avudraham*, we may suggest that a person take a moment before beginning the bracha to reflect upon any difficulties he may be going through--and ask Hashem Re'eh Nah --may my suffering until now serve as my kapparah--so that I can now be freed of further suffering and anguish. Indeed, with this in mind, we can better understand why the bracha of Re'eh comes immediately after the bracha of Selach Lanu--for even if we were undeserving of selicha based upon the previous bracha--please now add our past suffering to gain our atonement--so that we attain Geulah--salvation in all of its senses--Ki Go'el Chazak Atta--for you can bring us complete Geulah!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

We begin asking Hashem to *See* our affliction. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, teaches that this is based both on the Pasuk of Eicha (1:9): "*Re'eih Hashem Es Anyi*--Hashem, see my affliction", and the Pasuk in Tehillim (25:18): "*Re'eih Anyi V'Amali*--see my affliction and toil". HaRav Kanievsky adds that for those who recite *Re'eih Nah*--the word *Nah* here means 'please' and not 'now' as the Pasuk in Shmuel II (7:2) teaches: "*Re'eih Nah* (please) *Anochi Yoshev*



*Biveis Arazim VeAron HaElokim Yoshev Besoch HaYeriaH....*” HaRav Chaim adds that we ask Hashem not only to look at *Anyeinu* but ***Ve'Anyeinu--into*** our afflictions--because after all these years of Galus we do not even know how great our affliction is and how much we are missing!

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We continue with the phrase “*Ve'Riva Riveinu--and battle our battles for us.*” By asking Hashem to fight our battles, we demonstrate our unity with Him. For His enemies are our enemies, and in fact, our enemies despise us so greatly because we are the *Am Hashem*. Moreover, we emphasize that it is Hashem Who is the *Ish Milchama--and not us*. He therefore can defeat our enemies of any size and with any advantage. Additionally, He can defeat any of these enemies in a second, in a minute, in an hour, in a day, in a week or in a year. We therefore plead “*U'Gialeinu Miheira Lema'an Shimecha--please redeem us in the quickest possible manner--without delay, even if we are currently undeserving, for it is Kiddush Shem Shomayim atstake--our enemies are battling Your Name as well. Thus, with these words, we express to Hashem, an essential element of why we seek Geulah--LeKadesh Sheim Shomayim!*”

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We continue with the phrase ‘*Ki Go'el Chazak Atta*’. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, brings the *Siach Yitzchok*, who explains that there are prosecuting angels who argue against our Geulah. Indeed, Hashem created the Midas HaDin and the Satan, whose role it is to judge us with disfavor, and to attempt to bring regular Din upon us. At Kriyas Yam Suf, for example, there were those ministering angels who exclaimed: “They [the Mitzriyim] are ovdei Avodah Zara and they [the Bnei Yisroel] are ovdei Avodah Zara.” Accordingly, we needed the ***Yad Chazaka*** of Hashem to take us out. With Hashem’s incomprehensible strength, He overcomes the seemingly incontrovertible Midas HaDin that He has established in this world, and through this His Name is sanctified--as He shows that he is not limited by the world’s ‘rules’. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* adds that when Hashem saves us He does so in ways which evidence His Hashgacha Pratis over us--ways that are beyond *Tevah--the natural course of events*, which also demonstrates that Hashem is the ***Go'el Chazak***. HaRav Feivel Cohen, Shlita, once explained during the Intifada in Eretz Yisroel that although the situation seemed impossible of rectification as crazed bombers appeared out of the wood work seemingly everywhere--Hashem can be there to help overcome all of the impossible situations to bring us a Yeshua--this is the nature and reality of ‘*Ezri Mai'im Hashem, as the Oseh Shomayim VaAretz*’. We add that we are privileged to address Hashem here as *Go'el Chazak Atta--not as One Who is removed, foreign, or distant from us--but as One Who is close to us, Whom we speak to, and with Whom we have a direct and personal relationship!*

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We conclude our focus on the Seventh Bracha of Shemone Esrei--*Re’eih Ve’anyeinu*, with the words of HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z’tl, in the monumental work, *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, relating to the importance of praying for Geulah in our lives:”When I came to America [in December 1936], this country was known as the “Goldene Medinah.” However, today, we realize that it is not “golden” at all, but rather, it is based on “paper money.” As free as we seem to be here, nevertheless, we should know that here too, in America, we are living in galus. There is hate all around us. We now realize that even here in America we are not secure. We came here because we were disliked in Europe, and if we were suddenly forced to leave America, where would we find security? In Eretz Yisrael? There we are faced with the so-called “Palestinians,” a relatively new entity, who don’t like us there either, and who want the land for themselves. Who says we will be secure there? Where shall we go? To the moon? There is no place on earth where Jews are “erwuensched” (welcome), where the general population desires and would welcome an influx of Jews. Therefore, as long as we are in galus, we ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu to protect us from the danger that lurks all around us, although such danger may be quite unbeknownst to us.”

## **8. REFAEINU**

Rabi Eliyahu Roman, Z’tl, points out that we refer to Hashem in **Eight** different ways in the bracha--Hashem, Sehilaseynu, Atta, Kel, Melech, Rofeh, Ne’eman and Rachaman. Certainly NO COINCIDENCE, but also highlighting for us how important it is for us to have Kavannah in this bracha--we are seeking Refuos for ourselves and others, and we have the opportunity to implore Hashem, pleading with Him based on various aspects of His attributes! HaRav Yonasan Eibenschutz, Z’tl in the Sefer *Ya’aros Devash* adds the following three pointers when reciting the bracha:

- a. One must have in mind all cholei Yisroel, joining in their pain with them--for we are all one nefesh and guf--and if a part of us hurts, we hurt.

b. In fact, one should daven for the rishei Yisroel who are sick as well--so that he does not die a rasha, but instead is healed so that he can have the opportunity to do Teshuva. Not only will this help him, but it will make the one guf of K'lal Yisroel moves towards completeness, and will also remove rischa, a time of anger and din, upon the world engendered by the passing of a rasha in that state.

c.. One should especially daven for Talmidei Chachomim who are weakened and suffer through their studies and support of K'lal Yisroel. In fact, the Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 115: seif katan 1) brings from the Sefer *Seder HaYom* that the Ikar Kavannah in Refa'einu is our pleading with Hashem that He heal us so that we will be healthy and strong to learn Torah and perform all of the Mitzvos--enabling us to fulfill our role--and our potential--in this world! What can be more important-more crucial?! Let us truly focus this week!

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The Bracha begins with the words *Refaeinu Hashem V'Neirafeh*, **even though** it is based on the Posuk in Yirmiyahu ( 17:14 ) which is actually written in the singular. This teaches us that we are to join together the tza'ar of **all cholim who need a Refuah, asking Hashem to have mercy upon all cholim** (the Sefer Yesod Veshoresh Va'Avodah writes that one is mekayem a Mitzvas Aseh of VeAhavta LeRayacha Komocha for every person he davens for in the bracha). We additionally emphasize with the words *Refaeinu Hashem* that the Refuah comes **only** through Hashem and that all else is merely the medium (or to those not in the know, the disguise) of Hashem's Refuah. After these first vital words, we importantly continue with the crucial words *Hoshieinu V'Nivasheiah*. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* writes that with these potent two words we ask that Hashem **save us from anything that causes or brings about sickness--i.e., that we be saved from becoming sick**. Chazal (Shabbos 32A) teach that a person should always ask for mercy that he not become sick, for if he does become ill, then "*Omrin Lo Haveh Zechus V'Hipateir*"--they tell him show us what Zechusim you have to become well. It is therefore extremely essential that we have proper Kavannah in the first five words *Refaeinu Hashem V'Neirafeh, Hoshieinu V'Nivasheiah*--first davening for all those who are ill to become well, and then davening for those who are not ill to stay well. One's poignant and pointed prayer here demonstrates here not only his great Emunah in Hashem Yisborach, but also his Ahavas Yisroel--in wanting to do away with the tza'ar of others (including his own) and in bringing happiness to us all--at all times!

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HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains why this Bracha follows after HaShiveinu, Selach Lanu and Re'eh (Nah) V'Anyeinu. By following this order, we recognize that all sicknesses and all cures come from Hashem--as we recognize that we must first do Teshuva, then ask Hashem for forgiveness, then ask that our suffering serve as atonement, and only then can we legitimately plead with Hashem that He send the Refuah. With this, we additionally demonstrate that the medications and therapies we undertake are the means in this world to achieve Hashem's Refuah; we go to the internist, specialist or physical therapist with this in mind, and we take the pills, medications or shots by this understanding. That is why we begin with the two words that tell it all--*Refaeinu Hashem*--Heal us Hashem!

What, then, is the third word of the Bracha *V'Neirafeh*? The Zohar and the Mekubalim (brought in the Sefer *Baruch Sheamar* and in the Sefer *Sifsei Chaim*) write that there are Refuos which come through Malachim following Hashem's direction, which the Posuk alludes to with the words "Yishlach Devaro V'Yirpaeim"--Hashem sends His word and heals them (Tehillim 106). We, however, plead that our Refuah not come through any heavenly intermediaries, but directly from Hashem because only the Refuah that comes from Hashem is a Refuah LeOlam, a permanent Refuah, while the Refuah that comes from a Malach may allow the sickness to recur. Accordingly, the *V'Neirafeh* is an intensification of our request that Hashem heal us--so that we have a Refuah LeOlam!

Finally, we note that we conclude the bracha with the words of request *V'Rachaman Atta*. The Sefer *Baruch Sheamar* explains that the word *Rachaman*, as opposed to *Rachum* is a special indication of **great** *Rachamim*, and uses the phrase "Tamid Darko Lechach--this is Hashem's way." So, not only is Hashem All-Capable of a complete and permanent Refuah, but He is a *Rachaman*--always mercifully ready to provide it!

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We have thus far touched upon the first two phrases of the bracha: *Refaeinu Hashem V'Neirafei* and *Hoshieinu V'Nivasheia*. The next words continue "Ki *Sehilaseinu Atta*"--**because our whole praise will be You**. We may suggest that with this phrase we mean to indicate that we will give Hashem heartfelt praise, we will demonstrate our *Hakaras Hatov* to Hashem, upon achieving our Refuah. We thus affirm that we will not "forget about" the Shira that is due to Hashem, and that we will be sure to express our *Hoda'ah* after this tribulation is over with (as one does in a *Seudas Hoda'ah*, or other form or proclamation of *Hakaras Hatov*). We then continue with the term *V'Ha'alei Refuah Shleima L'Chol Makoseinu*. The word *VeHa'alei*--**and raise up**--not only indicates that we raise ourselves up as a result of the illness, but that we appreciate that in healing us Hashem will do something more than might otherwise happen in the 'natural' course of events. Moreover, the Sefer *Sifsei Chaim* adds that this applies not only to particular illnesses, but *LeChol Makoseinu*--**anything that a person feels that he has been smitten by--to all of our tzaros and difficulties which have affected us**. Here especially we specifically ask for a Refuah *Sheleima*--so that now that we have 'risen' to the occasion and we are hopeful that Hashem will provide the Refuah for the *makka*--it will once and for all be a Refuah *Sheleima*--a complete, final and ultimate healing. Let us importantly attempt to take each precious phrase of this bracha to its inestimable power and potency!

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The concluding statement of the Bracha is "*Ki Kel Melech Rofei Ne'eman V'Rachaman Atta*" with these words, we demonstrate that Hashem provides a Refuah as *Kel* (an All-Merciful One), as *Melech* (an All-Powerful One), and as a *Rofei Ne'eman V'Rachaman* (a Trustful and Merciful Healer). The Sefer *Baruch Sheamar* notes that the terms *Ne'eman* and *Rachaman* from a human perspective would seem contradictory, for in most circumstances to be a trustworthy healer he must prescribe medications, regimens, or treatments which could costly, time consuming, painful, and perhaps c'v damaging in other areas. On the other hand, one who is compassionate will not prescribe the full amount of bitter medication or difficult regimen, and accordingly may not bring about a full healing or recovery. Hashem *Yisborach*, however, can bring His *Middas HaRachamim* (as we had previously noted the term *Rachaman* indicates intense *Rachamim*) to

prevent Yesurei HaGuf while simultaneously still providing a complete, whole Refuah. Thus, with Hashem, the two words *Ne'eman* and *Rachaman* can be read together and go hand-in-hand--**and are in fact connected with a conjunctive 'vav'!** We then conclude the bracha with the words *Rofei Cholei Amo Yisroel*, while the bracha of Asher Yatzar refers to Hashem's healing of Chol Basar--everyone--all of His creations. The specific reference to Amo Yisroel here, and not to all creatures, may refer to the special **Hashgacha Pratis** that we have in being healed over all the other nations of the world. HaRav Schwab, Z'tl, adds that when Jews ask Hashem for healing, we ask not only for a Refuas HaGuf, a physical healing, but for a Refuas HaNefesh, a healing from our spiritual sicknesses as well. Therefore we conclude the Bracha with thanks to Hashem for allowing and providing for **both physical and spiritual healing!**

Additional Note: HaRav Schwab notes that in the final words of the bracha there is not comma after the word *Cholei*, and that the four words *Rofei Cholei Amo Yisroel* should be read together as one statement.

----- **SECOND SET** -----

This week we focus on the Eighth Bracha of Shemone Esrei--*Refaeinu*--*heal us of our physical ills*. We have just completed asking Hashem to heal our spiritual ills with the Brachos of *Hashiveinu* and *Selach Lanu*. Although our physical sickness arises from spiritual reasons (whether as a test, punishment or purification for the next world), we still must ask for a separate physical healing from Hashem--over and above our previous spiritual requests. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that there are particular times when *yisurim* leave a person (citing Avodah Zara 55A), and that the timing of their removal is affected by our *zechuyos* and *tefillos*. The first phrase of our Bracha, *Refaeinu Hashem VeNeirafei* is based directly upon the Pasuk: "*Refaeini Hashem VeEirafei*" (Yirmiyah 17:14). HaRav Chaim notes that we repeat the term of *VeNeirafei* to remind ourselves that if Hashem Himself does not heal us--all of the doctors in the world cannot heal us, and nothing that they do can effect our complete Refuah without Hashem's gifting it to us. In each Tefillah, each and every one of us asks for *Refaeinu*--even if we may not feel sick at the moment--because: (a) we are davening for all of K'lal Yisroel; (b) we are davening that we not get sick; and (c) there is no one who does not have some kind of health issues--and *all* health issues--from the most minor and on--can be healed by Hashem and only by Hashem!

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The next phrase in the Bracha is "*Hoshi'einu VeNivashe'ah*--save us and we will be saved". How does salvation fit into the Bracha of *Refaeinu*? We provide two approaches. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains that, as we noted yesterday, one interpretation of *Refaeinu Hashem VeNeirafei* is that we ask Hashem **to prevent us from becoming ill**. This is because the most chashuv of those involved in medicine search for ways and means for their patients not to get sick--preventive medicine; setting a person on the path of continued healthy living. The second step, if needed, is *Hoshi'einu VeNivashe'ah*--if we *c'v* do become ill, please heal us from the illness--for only if You heal us will we be truly healed. HaRav Schwab, Z'tl, in *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, provides a second perspective on *Hoshi'einu VeNivashe'ah*. He writes that we ask Hashem with these words to save us from the non-physical or spiritual diseases of which we are

aware: Emotional disturbances such as fears, apprehensions, frustration and bitterness. These illnesses are the result of one's lack of Bitachon in HaKadosh Baruch Hu. If a person does not have Emunah in Hashgacha Pratis (that HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows him personally and watches over him) he can be beset with all kinds of fears and worries. The cure for this disease is Emunah and Bitachon. It is for this reason that we turn directly to HaKadosh Baruch Hu in this Tefillah of *Hoshi'einu VeNivashe'ah*--please help us bolster our Emunah and Bitachon. If someone has true *Bitachon*, he will lose all his fears and apprehensions. When one realizes that whatever happens to him is not an accident, but rather, the will of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, his fears and worries dissipate. If he is convinced that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has a purpose for any difficulty that he may face, he will be totally accepting of it, as this is a part of the educational process that he must go through. The Navi (Yeshayahu 33:14) declares in the Name of Hashem that only the sinners will tremble, but those who have Bitachon in HaKadosh Baruch Hu will not fear. Reinforcing one's Emunah and Bitachon requires a great deal of help from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and for this we are Misparallel: Just as Yirmiyahu HaNavi was Misparallel "*Refaeini Hashem VeEirafei Hoshi'einu VeIvashe'ah*" (Yirmiyahu 17:14) for his own *Refuas Hanefesh* for known and unknown spiritual ailments--so too, do we, each and every member of *Klal Yisroel*, ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu to cure us of them!"

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The next phrase in the Bracha is "*Ki Sehilaseinu Atta*--for You are our praise". The obvious question is: "What does *our praise* have to do with *our beseeching Hashem* for Refuos?!" Firstly, we note once again that the source for these words are Yirmiyahu HaNavi (17:14), who exclaims *Refaeini Hashem VeEirafei Hoshi'einu VeIvashe'ah Ki Sehilasi Atta*. **HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that we are asking for a Refuah--in order for us to sincerely praise Hashem.** Indeed, the Siddur *Tefillah L'Moshe* (which presents HaRav Kanievsky's notes on Tefillah) brings a Midrash which states that one who desires to relate the praises of Hashem will be granted additional years of life. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, expounds upon this theme from a slightly different perspective: A classic question asked by many commentators is--how can one daven to be healed from illness as, after all, everything that Hashem does is for our good--and the illness has come as a punishment to expunge sin, or for some other meaning-filled purpose. HaRav Friedlander brings the Sefer *Nefesh HaChaim* (II:11), in which HaRav Chaim Volozhiner, Z'tl, writes that the one who is ill is essentially, when praying for a Refuah in the most pristine form, davening that the *Tza'ar HaShechina*--the Tza'ar that Hashem feels when the human being feels pain, be relieved by the healing of the human being. In a remarkable sense, then, the person is being *mevater* the illness which is best for him in order to relieve the *Tza'ar HaShechina* (see Sanhedrin 46A). Why is the *choleh* then, in fact, healed? It is because he feels the *Tza'ar HaShechina* to such a great extent--that the Kavod Shomayim which was impinged by his aveirah is now rectified. **Moreover, when people see that he is healed, they will recognize Hashem's Chesed to him, and a Kiddush Hashem will result. With this uplifting background in mind, we understand *Ki Sehilaseinu Atta* as--'it is a praise to Hashem for all those around the ill person to raise their voices in song and thanks for the Chesed He does with the person who was ill.'** The Rabbeinu Yonah provides the following Mashal to better understand this: A doctor sees someone who, because of his personal negligence, was critically injured, and severely reprimands the person for bringing himself to such a serious state. The sick person responds--"You are very right, and I was very wrong--but you now have the opportunity to show everyone what an excellent doctor you really are. Through my own fault, all will

recognize your greatness and expertise.” **With the words *Ki Sehilaseinu Atta*, we humbly admit to Hashem that although we may have brought ourselves to a sorry state--all know that only You can bring a Refuah--and all will then recognize Your unparalleled greatness. Please--from my past misdeeds--may there come out a Kiddush Shem Shomayim--causing those around me to praise You!**

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The next phrase in the Bracha is “*VeHa’aleh Refuah Sheleima LeChol Makkoseinu*--bring complete recovery for all of our ailments”. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, notes that the word *VeHa’aleh*--and bring upon us, indicates that the Refuah is not being created now, but that it is already in existence, and now just has to be brought to its current location. This is absolutely the case, he notes--for Hashem does not bring any *makkah* upon us unless He has already has a Refuah prepared. Furthermore, HaRav Chaim notes, we ask here for a Refuah *Sheleima*--so that there is no aftermath or after-effects from the treatments or medication itself. We also ask for a Refuah not only from sicknesses, but also from all *makkos*--which are the other things that can do us harm [as the Pasuk (Devarim 28:61) teaches, “*Gam Kol Choli VeChol Makkah...*”]. We then implore Hashem to heal us as a ‘*Melech Rofei Ne’eman V’Rachaman*’--for a king must heal his subjects just as he must feed them--and in our case, moreover, Hashem is not only the King--but the expert Rofei as well, Who knows exactly how to heal us! What is the meaning of the words ‘*Ne’eman*’? HaRav Chaim Kanievsky teaches that it likely means that when Hashem heals, it is a healing *that will last*. The term ‘*V’Rachaman*’ (*Especially Merciful One*) teaches us that Hashem can heal the sickness earlier than was expected and additionally that Hashem can arrange for one to experience less pain than what might have otherwise been ‘naturally’ anticipated. The term ‘*Ah-ta*’ teaches us that despite Hashem’s Greatness as a Melech, Rofei, Ne’eman and Rachaman--we still have a personal and direct relationship with Him, and He allows us to refer to Him as ‘You’!

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The Bracha concludes: “*Baruch Atta Hashem Rofei Cholei Amo Yisroel*--Who heals the sick of His nation, Yisroel.” HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, notes that the bracha is in the present tense, because Hashem is constantly and continuously healing us--without interruption--as He provides us with protection from illness--preventing us from the sicknesses which abound, and heals us from illness when it has affected us. HaRav Friedlander then adds that we specifically refer to ourselves as ‘*Amo*’--highlighting our special relationship and closeness--in order to be *me’orer* Hashem’s love for us and our love for Him. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, teaches that the conclusion of *Rofei Cholei Amo Yisroel* is different than the conclusion of Asher Yatzar, where we state “*Rofei Chol Basar*”. This is because we are now emphasizing the unique and personalized *Hashgacha Pratis* inherent within the Refuos that Hashem grants the individual members of K’lal Yisroel. The following additional notes relating to Refuah are brought in the Siddur *Tefillah L’Moshe*, based upon the teachings of HaRav Chaim:

A. Chazal (Brachos 60A) teach *Baruch Rofei Chinam*--Hashem heals for free and it is a complete healing. We recite these words after we have taken medication or a treatment.

B. Chazal (Brachos 10A) also teach that even if a sharp sword is placed on a person's neck, one should still daven for mercy, and that even if one saw in a nevuah at first that he was going to pass on--this could be reversed (Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin 10:2). Such is the power of Tefillah!

C. Chazal (Bava Basra 116A) teach that if there is a sick person in the house, one should go to a Chochom and ask him to beseech Hashem for Rachamim. The *Nemukei Yosef* (ibid.) writes that this means that one should go to a *Tofes Yeshiva*. HaRav Chaim explains that a *Tofes Yeshiva* is someone who is *Marbitz Torah B'Rabim*.

D. We daven for Talmidei Chachomim who are weak in the Bracha of *Al HaTzadikim* when we recite the words *Yehemu Rachamecha*.

## 9. BARECH ALEINU

It is fascinating to note that this is the only bracha of Shemone Esrei that begins with the word ***Barech***--specifically seeking bracha at the outset. Perhaps this is an allusion to the fact that while it may be easier to have Bitachon in other areas--Hashem will help me with Teshuva, Hashem will provide the Refuah, Hashem will provide the Geulah--it is more difficult to have a complete trust in areas of Parnassah. After all, don't I earn a living because of my expertise, my skill, my unique abilities, my training, in my profession or job? So, at the outset, we clear and clean our minds--ridding ourselves of western thoughts and beliefs--as we aver that our Parnassah comes only because of Your Blessing--which we whole-heartedly ask for. Moreover, when we recognize that our livelihood, our sustenance--every dollar and cent, every agorah, is from Hashem--then ipso facto our monies will be blessed because we will seek, earn, keep and possess only honest funds--as we recognize it all as emanating from Hashem. We then follow with the word ***Aleinu*** to emphasize that we want the bracha of *Barech* to apply not only to us, but to all our people--so that no one is tempted by his Yetzer Hora to follow any inappropriate means of moving money into his pocket, and so that people who currently do not have enough to make ends meet can see and savor Hashem's blessing of sustenance with joy. Accordingly, we daven for those who are indigent, for all those currently in need, and for all of our brethren. The Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* notes that the *Ikar* of Parnassah comes not through Din, but through Rachamim, and so it is essential that we have the proper Kavannah in this bracha, imploring Hashem's Rachamim upon us and upon all of K'lal Yisroel.--***Barech Aleinu*** --let the words sink in--and flow out!

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HaRav Gamliel Rabanovitch, Shlita, asks why it is that we ask first in this Bracha that Hashem bless this year with prosperity, and only afterwards, in the next succeeding Brachos, do we daven for Hashem for the Geulah. After all, shouldn't we have our priorities in order?! HaRav Rabanovitch writes, in truth, our *Ikar Tefillah* for the Geulah is for the Tza'ar HaShechina that is currently in Galus, and it is this Tza'ar that we must experience and feel [Hakhel Note: Especially on a day like today] while we are davening for the Geulah. However, if we are too troubled and bothered by our personal Tirdos and Tzaros, then we will be davening for the Geulah essentially so that we be relieved of all of our suffering. We therefore daven now that



Hashem bless us with sustenance and prosperity--so that our prayers for the Geulah can be more pristine--for the Shechinah to come back home, and for us to join Him!

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HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, asks why we ask that Hashem give a Bracha to HaShanah HaZos--this year. He explains that Shanah is related to Shinuy--meaning change, and over the course of a year there are changes (hot and cold, rain and drought etc.) We accordingly ask that Hashem infuse his Bracha into each and every one of the changes that occur throughout the year. It is for this reason that we begin the Bracha not simply with Bareich Aleinu Hashem, but with Bareich Aleinu Hashem *Elokeinu*--the word '*Elokeinu*' is especially emphasizing Hashem's Hashgacha Pratis over each and every aspect of our Birchas HaParnassah through the vicissitudes of the year. We then quickly add "V'Es Kol Minei Sevuasah L'Tova--that all of the specifics, and all of the changes, turn out for our good. We do not mean only our physical good, but our spiritual good as well--through our recognition that each and every Bracha came from Hashem and was not the product of Kochi V'Otzem Yadi--and through our utilization of the Brachos wisely--to meet our true purpose in this world (and not as an end in and of itself). If we can elevate our Gashmiyus in this way, we will demonstrate that we are ready for the Brachos of Geulah, which are soon to follow (yes, the double entendre is intended)!

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The bracha of Bareich Aleinu contains words which change depending upon the time of year--either VeSein Bracha or VeSein Tal U'Matar LiVracha. This relates directly to the thought conveyed yesterday-- we ask that Hashem bless the year (*Shanah*) and all of its *changes*. There are then two different nuscha'os, or texts, which follow--depending upon our custom, you recite either *VeSabeinu Mituvecha* or *VeSabeinu MiTuvah*--and the meaning changes depending upon your custom. The Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 117, seif katan 1) writes that it is the opinion of the Magen Avraham in the name of the Rosh, and the Maharshal, that we recite *VeSabeinu MiTuvecha*, while in the Siddur of the Arizal [as well as in the Ma'aseh Rav and in the Iyun Tefillah] the nusach is *MiTuvah*. What is the difference between *Mituvecha* and *MiTuvah*? The Rosh writes that *MiTuvecha* refers to Hashem, and not to the year, i.e., we are asking Hashem to satiate us from His goodness. The Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* beautifully adds that by *Mituvecha* we indicate that we want our sustenance to come from that which is *good to Hashem*--with not even a speck of gezel or in proprietary associated our livelihood or funds. HaRav Chaim Friedlander brings a second interpretation of *VeSabeinu MiTuvecha* as well. He writes in the name of the Sefer *Avnei Eliyahu* that we are asking Hashem that a little Gashmiyus in this world satiate us because it is *Mituvecha*--because it emanates from Hashem, so that the spiritual overtakes the material. As Rashi writes in Chumash (to Vayikra 26:5), one can eat even a little and still feel satiated inside. The second nusach--*VeSabeinu MiTuvah* does not refer to Hashem or His goodness, but instead [according to the Gra and the Iyun Tefillah] refers to Eretz Yisroel, which is the Pnei Ha'adamah just referred to in the bracha. We ask of Hashem that He give us from the good with which Eretz Yisroel was blessed, as the Eretz Zavav Chalav U'Devash! Note: HaRav Friedlander points out that there is only one nusach in the bracha of Mai'ain Shalosh (Al HaMichya)--according to all opinions it is *VeSabeinu MiTuvah*--referring to Eretz Yisroel and its goodness.

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It is interesting to note that the bracha both begins with *Barech* and ends with *Mevarech*--indicating that sustenance is a particular area in which one must especially recognize its true Source (from beginning to end!). In fact, in the Birkas Kohanim (Bamidbar 6:24 et. al.), the first

word is also related--*Yevorechecha*. Rashi there brings Chazal that the Kavannah is *Yisborchu Nechasecha*--may your possessions be blessed! We would think that the holy and limited words of the Birkas Kohanim would be involved with more 'sublime' matters. However, the very fact that this is the only word of the Birkas Kohanim in which bracha is directly utilized--and this is *pashut p'shat* according to Rashi--teaches us how we have to especially recognize that bracha is only from Hashem in financial matters--and act and behave accordingly. Three final notes from HaRav Schwab Z'tl (in the monumental *Rav Schwab on Prayer*--a must for EVERYONE'S home): a. WE had previously asked Hashem to bless Hashanah HaZos--this year. In the last words of the bracha, we recite that Hashem blesses the years--in the plural--as an expression of our Emunah Sheleima that Hashem will bless future years as well. b. If a person has difficulties with Parnassah, he should add his own personal tefillah just before he closes the bracha with Baruch Atta Hashem. c. Even though a person's Parnassah has been decided for the year on Rosh Hashanah, we ask that Hashem to increase the predetermined amount--in the merit of our expenditures for Shabbos and Yom Tov and for the support and promotion of Torah learning...if we use the money we have for the right reasons...the more **Bracha** one can expect in return!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

Since the First Bracha of Shemone Esrei, we have not began a Bracha with the term '*Bareich*'--bless us with. Here, we will ask Hashem **for the blessing of Parnassah and sustenance**. We note that the first word in Birkas Kohanim is '*Yevarechecha*'--bless us, which Rashi (Bamidbar 6:24), quoting Chazal, writes **refers to blessing one with prosperity**. With this word, then, we especially emphasize our absolute recognition that all of our monetary matters, all of our wealth and all of our possessions are a *blessing* from Hashem. Indeed, the second word of the Bracha--'*Aleinu*'--upon us is a direct request that Hashem bring these blessings down upon us. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, points out that there are only three brachos in Shemone Esrei (after the First Bracha) that begin not only with the one name of '*Hashem*' or with '*Atta*', but with '*Hashem Elokeinu*'--they are *Bareich Aleinu Hashem Elokeinu*, *Shema Koleinu Hashem Elokeinu*, and *Retzei Hashem Elokeinu*. In his unique and unparalleled manner, HaRav Chaim explains that each reference is based on a specific Pasuk--*Lema'an Yevarechecha Hashem Elokecha* (Devarim 14:29); *Hashem Elokim Shemah Tefillasi* (Tehillim 84:9); and *Hashem Elokecha Yirtzecha* (Shmuel II 24:23)!

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The next phrase of the Bracha is *Es HaShana HaZos*--this year. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that every year one has a different *gezeirah* relating to Parnassah, and that one therefore does not as a matter of course remain wealthy, middle class or poor. We see this in real life with those around us--**and this is our opportunity to daven for success now**. Furthermore, we ask for *V'Es Kol Minei Sevuasah*--every single aspect of the Parnassah--to be *LeTovah*. HaRav Chaim explains that even if there was *r'l a gezeirah lera'ah*, we ask Hashem for it now to be changed to *Tovah*. The Sefer *BeRumo Shel Olam* adds that our Kavannos should include that our Parnassah be given to us *BeNachas Velo Betza'ar*--with calmness and serenity and not with pain, and additionally, that the indigent of K'lal Yisrael be taken out of their dire straits as well.

Thus, the term *LeTovah* has both a quantitative and qualitative meaning--and we should keep them both in mind!

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The next phrase of the Bracha is *V'Sein Bracha Al P'nei HaAdamah*. The *Eitz Yosef* beautifully notes that with this phrase we pray that “*Shelo Yihei Ein Briyah Tzarah B'Chaverta*”--that all peacefully coexist in their attainment of Parnassah, without the trials and tribulations of undercutting another, looking good at the expense of another, unfair competition, etc. The next two words of the Bracha are *V'Sab'einu MiTuvah/MiTuvecha*--there is a dispute among the authorities as to what the proper *girsah* is. The G'ra rules that the proper word is *MiTuvah*--i.e., from the goodness of the Land, referring to Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, the *Eitz Yosef* brings that the last letters of the words *P'nei HaAdamah V'Sa'b'ei'nu MiTuvah* constitute the letters of Yud-Key-Vav-Key--providing weight to this *girsah*. The *Rosh*, however, teaches that we should recite the word *MiTuvecha*--i.e., asking Hashem that we be satiated from His Goodness. In the *Sefer Ya'aros Devash*, HaRav Yonasan Eibishitz, Z'tl, adds an important insight towards the *girsah* of *MiTuvecha*: “If *c'v* there is some taint of *issur* in one's food--if it comes from any kind of *gezel*, if there is some prohibited matter within the food, or even if the meal is eaten together with the wrong company--then the *Ruach HaKedushah* that is in the food leaves it, and the *Ruach HaTumah* that replaces it is digested with the food, and leaves its negative mark on the character of the person who consumes it.” If, instead, we are satiated *MiTuvecha*--from the bounty of Hashem, and in the permissible and appropriate way that Hashem would like us to eat, then we will actually imbibe holiness and purity from our food. Accordingly, the *Ya'aros Devash* writes, one should daven ‘*me'od b'kavannah*’ when reciting the words *V'Sab'einu MiTuvecha* that the food he consumes come from and through the proper sources--so that one attains a purity from the food he consumes--“and if he does so, Hashem will listen to his Tefillos--and no sin will befall him when eating foods(!).”

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The next phrase of the Bracha is *U'Vareich Shenaseinu KaShanim HaTovos*--and bless our years like the good years. What do we mean by the ‘good years’? HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, writes in his *Sefer Ta'amah D'ikra*, that this refers to two specific years--years in which the fruits were never as plentiful in Eretz Yisrael as they were in those two years. These two years were: (i) the year that Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael; and (ii) the year that Bnei Yisrael were exiled from Eretz Yisrael. In the future, HaRav Chaim writes, *all years* will be like those years--and that is what we mean with the words *U'Vareich Shenaseinu KaShanim HaTovos*--**that we will be zoche to the Geulah--i.e., that time when all our years will be like those two years!** The *Siddur Siach Yitzchak* interprets the phrase as referring even to our times--explaining that we are davening for goodness in *gashmiyus* from which will come not additional *ta'avos* or a *yeridah* of any kind (as in *Vayishman Yeshurun VaYivat*--as one waxes fat, he may rebel), **but rather goodness in *gashmiyus* from which will come Hatzlacha in *ruchniyus*--i.e., the opportunity to grow in Torah and Yiras Shomayim without deterrents and disturbances, just as the past good years when we were blessed with *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus* together!**

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The next phrase of the Bracha is *Baruch Atta Hashem Mevarech HaShanim*--blessed are You Hashem, Who blesses the years. HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z'tl, in the monumental work *Rav Schwab on Prayer* (Artscroll), provides us with the following insight at the conclusion of our Bracha: "If a person has difficulties with his Parnassah, he should add his own personal tefillah here just before *Baruch Atta Hashem Mevarech HaShanim*.... The Bracha concludes in the present tense, in expression of our Emunah Sheleima that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will fulfill His promise to bless the future years that are to come.... Additionally, although our livelihood for the present year has already been decided on Rosh Hashanah, nevertheless, we ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu here to increase the predetermined amount, in the merit of our extensive expenditures in the areas of Shabbos and Yom Tov, and for the support and promotion of Torah learning. The more we expand our efforts for these objectives, and practice them on a large scale, the more we can expect the blessings of HaKadosh Baruch Hu in return--*Im Hosif Mosifin Lo*--if one adds on to the expenditures for these Mitzvah purposes, then Hashem will add to his income." In a different vein, HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, notes that the word *HaShanim* (the years) is related to the word *HaShinuyim* (the changes). In the broader world view, HaRav Friedlander writes, changes and variations may prove more harmful than helpful. Indeed, some people may be heard to say "Hopefully the economy won't be worse than it is now." People recognize that change brings with it the unknown. We know that with Hashem's protective embrace of us, His blessing--He will be Mevareich these Shinuyim, these changes--even if they are part of what others consider to be economic downturns or seasonal cycles....and we pray here that they will be for our good--as Hashem *adds on* to all the blessing He is already providing us with!"

## **10. TEKA BESHOFAR**

The Sefer *Rinas Chaim* notes that in the first six Brachos of request, our request are for individuals within the community--whereas the second group of six Brachos--which commence with Teka BeShofar--are requests of and for the entire community. The *Kuntrus HisChaskus BiT'fillah* brings the following further parallel:

"The Avudraham teaches that the first six Brachos of request in Shemone Esrei--commencing with *Atta Chonen*-- correspond to the second six, which commence with *Teka BeShofar*. The first group begins with the prayer for intelligence, without which a person has nothing, and in the words of the Shulchan Aruch (115: 1) this is what distinguishes the human from the animal, and the Mishnah Berurah (there) adds, that this should be one's main request--that Hashem should bestow upon us an upright and logical understanding. The corresponding bracha in the second group is the one requesting the ingathering of our exiles to Eretz Yisroel, as the Torah describes in Parshas Nitzavim (Devorim 30), because the Galus degrades the spirituality of our holy nation, and withholds from us the holiness of Eretz Yisroel and Yerushalayim which have the power to rejuvenate us with powerful faith and love of Hashem and His Torah and Mitzvos. Thus, the ingathering of the exiles is similar to an injection of true **spiritual intelligence** into our entire nation."

**Additional Note One:** The Sefer *Mesilas Yeshorim* (Chapter 19) writes that when we daven for the Geulah and the return of Kovod Shomayim, **we give Nachas to Hashem just by showing we**

**really care and make a sincere plea**--and whether or not Hashem immediately accedes to our request. We must really reJewvinate ourselves for this Bracha--and give Hashem Nachas!

**Additional Note Two:** What is the Shofar *Gadol*? The Kuntres *Avodas HaTefillah* brings that it is GADOL BECHASHIVUS--it is not necessarily a large Shofar but it is an extremely important one--picture the MILLIONS AND MILLIONS--from this and previous generations--who will be so fully and finally overjoyed with the news--speedily and in our day!

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When we recite the **three key terms** *Shofar Gadol*, *Sa Neis*, and *Kabtzzeinu Yachad*, we should *put our hearts into it*, and visualize the enormity and significance of the Geulah--which will come, but which we want to come *now*. One reader commented that the Shofar Gadol may allude to the similar *Kol Gadol* of the Shofar of Mattan Torah which did not weaken. So too, the Geulah that the Shofar will herald will be forever and ever--is there anything larger! Similarly, the *Neis*, the banner will be high enough for the world to see as our exiles are ingathered from Johannesburg and Buenos Aires , from Vancouver and Stockholm , and from New York and London as well. What an event--what a happening--and it could be before our very eyes! Finally, we will be gathered *Yachad*, all together--side by side in ultimate peace and harmony. Let us focus on the sheer enormity of the event--and give these unparalleled requests the **heartfelt** clear Kavannah that they, **very literally**, so greatly deserve!

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HaRav Eliyahu Munk in his Sefer *Olam HaTefillos* writes that this Bracha is **centrally placed** as the middle Bracha of Shemone Esrei because it bridges between the requests we make for the individual and the upcoming requests that we make for the community. In fact, in the Bracha, we ask that Hashem **actually unite the individuals into a community--as the Mekabeitz Nidchei Amo Yisroel**. The Sefer *Dover Shalom* provides an outstanding insight for us in this regard. He writes that the three stages of our uniting and Geulah are represented in the three phrases of the Bracha prior to its conclusion: First, there will be a *Shofar Gadol L'Cheirusainu*--i.e., we will be freed of our Shibud Malchiyos, of our subjugation to the nations of the world. Then, *VeSah Neis*, a banner will be raised to gather us to one place, readying us for the Geulah. Finally, *Vekabtzzeinu Yachad MeiArbah Kanfos HaAretz*--we will actually be ingathered from everywhere and anywhere, the closest--and furthest--places on earth. These Three-Steps actually mirror the Three Steps of our Geulah from Mitzrayim-- as we first stopped working for the Mitzriyim as the Makkos continued, then were miraculously gathered to one central meeting place where we all left together from (see Shemos 12:37)--and then we finally left all together--as a united people! **Every time** we recite *Teka B'Shofar*, we plead with Hashem that he begin now with the *Shofar Gadol L'Cheirusainu*--first freeing us of the Shibud of Galus--and then continue the process so that we can all--united and together--experience the Geulah Sheleimah--speedily and in our day!

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The Sefer *Seder HaYom* writes that there is something very special about this Bracha that goes even beyond the previous Bracha of Go'el Yisroel, in that we ask for redemption not only personally and in our current situations and environments--but this time we seek "*Hashkeit U'vitcha B'Artzseinu Ka'asher Batechila*"--for us to return to our original wholeness and wholesomeness as we existed when the Bais HaMikdash was first built. This means (as is

brought in the Siddur HaGra) that we are davening here that the Aseres HaShevatim, part of whom disappeared into the dark mountains, and part of whom disappeared beyond the Sambatyon River, will be brought together with us once again. Even those who are “Nidchei--dispersed or pushed away, will be brought back together! Fascinatingly, the *Seder HaYom* adds that the term Yisroel, the last word of the Bracha, does not only refer to the people of Klal Yisroel, but to Yaakov Avinu, known as Yisroel. How?! Yaakov had three sons, each in a *different kind* of Golus--Yosef, who everyone had given up on; Shimon, who was alone and in trouble; and Binyomin, for whose life he very much feared. It is from and for all of these different types of Golus that we daven--so that we can come back B'Simcha Gedolah from each and every kind of Golus--to a united Geulah! Remember--***M'Kabeitz Nidchei Amo Yisroel!***

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A. *The Art of Jewish Prayer* (Rabbi Yitzchok Kirzner, Z'tl, with Lisa Aiken), brings a Midrash (Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer 31) which explains what we mean by *Shofar Gadol*. The Midrash teaches that no part of the Ayil that Avraham Avinu sacrificed was at all wasted, because he sacrificed it with total dedication and devotion: “The left horn of the Ayil was the Shofar that was blown when the Torah was given, the sinews were made into strings for the Kinor that was used by Dovid HaMelech...the right horn of this Ayil which was much larger than the left one is the Shofar that will be blown by Eliyahu HaNavi at the ingathering of our exiles.” This is what is meant by the Shofar ***Gadol***--it is the Shofar that is ***larger*** than the Shofar used at Matan Torah! We must appreciate the enormity of the event--it is a culmination and epitome of our Achdus, as demonstrated use the Shoresh of *Kabeitz* (**gathered together**) used three times during the course of the Bracha.

B. The Sefer *Acharis L'Shalom* writes that we conclude the Bracha with ***Amo Yisroel***--adding the word *Amo* [in the previous bracha we mentioned Go'el Yisroel, without *Amo*], because we--as **His Nation** want to indicate our sincere and dedicated belief that **we can bring the Geulah** not just because the time has come, but through our own Ma'asim--our Torah, Tefillah, and Mitzvos. One final incredible point: HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, notes the use of the Shoresh *Kabeitz* in the bracha and adds that it derives from the Posuk in Yeshaya “*Ne'um Hashem Elokim MiKabeitz Nidchei Yisroel Od Akabeitz Alav L'Nikbatzav*” (56:8). He teaches that the last four words--*Od Akabeitz Alav L'Nikbatzav*, indicate that not only will we be ingathered ourselves, but that all of our possessions and belongings will join us--Hashem making the experience all the more wonderful and all the more enjoyable for us ! How can we not say **Baruch Atta Hashem with sincere meaning for all He gives us in this Bracha!!**

----- **SECOND SET** -----

HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita teaches that we see from the order of our bracha that **FIRST** Eliyahu HaNavi will blow the Shofar Gadol--the great Shofar (others say that it will be Mich'ael as the Sar Yisrael who will blow, and others say that HaKadosh Baruch Hu *kevaychol* Himself, as at Har Sinai, will blow), then Eliyahu will lift a banner as a sign for us all to gather--and we will do so! According to Chazal, the Shofar Gadol is the right horn from the *ayil* that replaced Yitzchak at the Akeidah--and will be extended to a length of 1,000 amos! HaRav Chaim makes a cheshbon based upon Chazal that a shofar of this size can literally be heard **THE WORLD**

OVER! Because the speed of sound is slower--we may see the banner before we hear the Shofar which was blown first. Hakhel note: As we recite the words *Tekah Beshofar Gadol LeChairuseinu*--let us envision the moment and movingly pray that it become reality--bimheira veyameinu!

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HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, points out that the *bakashos* in Shemone Esrei until this point were essentially personal *bakashos* for ourselves--and are only requested in the plural because we join our brothers together with us. Beginning with *Tekah B'Shofar*, we begin a series of brachos **on behalf of all of K'lal Yisrael as a Tzibbur**. HaRav Friedlander emphasizes that we must recognize that to us redemption means not merely the physical redemption from the lands of the 70 nations and the return of us all to Eretz Yisrael (in and of itself a great accomplishment), but also our spiritual redemption--an unfathomable lifting of our spirits in Avodas Hashem. **Our physical redemption, and our tribulations and sufferings will end because the spiritual redemption has occurred.** HaRav Friedlander explains that the Shofar blast to occur at the outset of our Geulah is more than a physical sound--it is a symbol (as it is on Rosh Hashanah) of the weakening and downward fall of the Yetzer Hara within every member of K'lal Yisrael. Indeed, the *Shofar Gadol* at that time will have a greater impact and affect upon us even than the unrelenting Shofar blast at Har Sinai--for it will effect a *Nitzachon Gamur* over the Yetzer Hara. **This is the meaning of *Tekah B'Shofar Gadol L'Cheiruseinu*--to be freed, this time entirely--from the Yetzer Hara's misplaced drives, animal-driven desires and core antagonism towards Avodas Hashem.** Hakhel Note: It would seem that the blast will be a Tekiyah sound only--representing no weakness, no let up, and no staggered or slow approach--but rather a strong, unrelenting and decisive victory. The Kavannah we have when reciting the words *Tekah B'Shofar Gadol L'Cheiruseinu* may be telling us as to how sincerely we want to attain this great and lofty moment--victory, at last!

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The bracha continues with the phrase *VeSah Nes LeKabeitz Galuyoseinu*--**and raise a banner to gather in our exiles.** HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, brings two key Pesukim from Yeshaya which do, in fact, refer specifically to a banner being raised at the time of the Geulah: "*VeNasah Nes LaGoyim VeAsaf Nidchei Yisrael U'Nefutzos Yehudah Yikabetz MeiArba Kanfos HaAretz...*"--He will raise a banner for the nations and assemble the disbursed of Yisrael...from the four corners of the earth" (Yeshaya 11:12); and "*Kol Yoshvei Sevel VeShochnei Eretz Kinsoh Nes Harim Tiruh...*"--all the inhabitants of the world and dwellers of the earth will see when the banner is hoisted up upon the mountains" (Yeshaya 18:3). The raising of a banner for us all to see, explains HaRav Friedlander, means that there will be two different kinds of spiritual redemption--one through the hearing of the Shofar (described yesterday) and a second through the sight of the banner. The term for banner is '*Nes*'--which has the same meaning as miracle--for what we will see are outstanding and extraordinary miracles which will arouse us to do new spiritual heights. Just as each Shevet had a banner or flag which symbolized and identified the Shevet, Hashem's banner will be the blatant and awesome miracles which will cause us to see Hashem's complete mastery and rulership over the world. When we experience the great miracles at the time of Geulah we will be existentially uplifted in ways which we cannot imagine now. **Through these miracles, the *ikar Galus*--which is the spiritual Galus within us, our**

**attachment to the culture and habits of the nature around us--will be completely uprooted, and with this will come an end to our physical Galus as well.** Additionally and remarkably, adds HaRav Friedlander, the miracles will gather in all those who are deserving --no matter what the nature of their particular Galus may be, no matter how disparate our exiles are across the globe. No matter who we are or where we are--if we are worthy, Hashem's outward manifestation will cure us of any and all Galus-generated ills--simultaneously!

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The next phrase is "*VeKabetzeinu Yachad MeiArba Kanfos Ha'aretz*--the ingathering that we request now is not a small or partial one, as at the time we left Bavel to return to Eretz Yisrael (when only slightly more than 40,000 people returned and the Aseres HaShevatim did not return), but instead we request "*Yachad--for everyone to return together*". Our physical return is, once again, only a byproduct of the spiritual return--as we ask to be taken out of the mores and cultures of the foreign ideologies that surround us--from South Africa to the United States, and from Hungary to Chile. Indeed, the test of Galus in each and every country is different--and for us to be gathered together and reunited in common purity is certainly a profound request and an unfathomable accomplishment. We thus should be very much inspired when reciting the word '*Yachad*'--for it means so much! On the latter half of the phrase-- *MeiArba Kanfos Ha'aretz*--from the four corners of the earth, HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z'tl, provides an important additional insight. The word *Kanfos* (corners) is very much related to the word 'wings'--and is rooted in the Pasuk (Yeshaya 24:16): *MiKnaf Ha'aretz Zemiros Shamanu Tzvi LaTzadik*--from the wing of the earth, we have heard songs 'beauty belongs to the Tzadik'. HaRav Schwab explains: This means that when that time comes, not only the Jewish people, but the whole world, will recognize HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and will be elevated to a higher level--the earth will have 'sprouted wings'. People everywhere will understand that they will have to change their lives-- simply stated, there will be a moral uplifting in the whole world. So, concludes, Rav Schwab, we ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu to gather us together and unite us--in a newly uplifted world! Hakhel Note: **Who can wait?!**

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The bracha concludes with the words *Baruch Atta Hashem Mekabeitz Nidchei Amo Yisroel*--Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Yisrael. HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z'tl, teaches that this bracha ends in the present tense because we have such Emunah that the Geulah take place--we can 'taste' the ingathering of the exiles! HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, teaches that the term *Nidchei*--the dispersed--is a crucial one, for it is based in the Pasuk of "...*U'va'u HaOvdim B'Eretz Ashur Vehanidachim B'Eretz Mitzrayim...*--and those who are lost in Ashur and dispersed in Mitzrayim will return to Yerushalayim (Yeshayah 27:13). This means that even those who may have been previously 'lost' their Yiddishkeit may be gathered in as well (obviously based upon factors beyond our understanding). One thing is for sure though--those who will meet the criteria of *Amo Yisrael* (*those who do Hashem's will show that they want to be his nation*)--as the bracha concludes--**they will all surely be gathered in**. What gives us even additional hope and aspiration is that, as the *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* teaches, when the Geulah comes, *Yisrael--including the Aseres HaShevatim will be reunited--this time inseparably and invincibly!* The conclusion of this bracha spirits us to pray for the day!



## 11. HOSHIVAH SHOFTEINU

As we noted last week, the Sefer *Rinas Chaim* writes that in the first six Brachos of request, our requests are for individuals within the community--whereas the second group of six Brachos--which commence with Teka BeShofar--are requests of and for the entire community. The *Kuntrus HisChaskus BiT'fillah* brings in the name of the Avudraham that each bracha in the first group of six corresponds, or has a matching bracha, in the second group of six. The second bracha of the first group (**HaShiveinu Avinu**) requests help for the individual in Torah, Avodah and Teshuvah. Corresponding to this, the second bracha in the second group for Klal Yisroel is **Hoshivah Shofteinu**. Here, we beg Hashem to reappoint the Sanhedrin. This will revive the authority of the Torah, and consequently strengthen the kingship of Hashem over His people. Thus, truth and justice will return to K'lal Yisroel. Additionally, the Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* writes that the *Ikar HaShrayas HaShechina* is through the Sanhedrin--**for they will remedy and cure all the Torah that has been lost and forgotten, ridding us of dissention and indecision**. Moreover, the *Ya'aros Devash* concludes, when there are *Dayanim Keshairim* in the world, then bracha is *Sheruyah B'Olam*--the world is infused with bracha. It is for this reason that the bracha continues *VeHaser Mimenu Yagon VeAnacha*--for as bracha pervades the world--all of the sources of agony and groaning depart--and this time...it will be forever!

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We begin the bracha with a Tefilla for our *Shoftim*, i.e., our *Sanhedrin* to return, so that the *resha'im* of the world are dealt with, bringing greater peace to the entire world and each and every person in it as a result. We then request that Hashem grant *Yoatzeinu Kevatechila*--the level and status of *Chachomim* who lived *at the time of nev'ua*, who could give the exact *eitzah*, a final determination of direction or advice that is needed by a person in each and every situation in which he needs guidance. If one would like to visualize it, perhaps he can imagine *Moshe Rabbeinu* and *Aharon Hakohein* back on the *Sanhedrin*, and *Dovid HaMelech* and *Shlomo Hamelech*--once again giving *Eitzos* to our people. This is not out of the realm of possibility--it is going to happen--and this is what we are praying for--so daven well!

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In this bracha, we ask Hashem to return *Judges* and our *Yoatzim* to the prior levels of our greatness, and immediately continue with the phrase "*Vehaser Mimenu Yagon Va'Anacha*--and remove from us sorrow and groaning." The Sefer *Avudraham* writes that the juxtaposition here teaches that with the return of the *Shoftim* and the *Yoatzim*, our *Yagon* and *Anacha* will forthwith depart. What is *Yagon* and what is *Anacha*? The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* brings that *Yagon* refers to *De'agah B'Lev*--sadness, or a troubled or worry-filled heart. *Anacha*, on the other hand, refers to sadness that comes from physical strain and *tzaros* that actually occur. When justice returns to the world, and the *Shechina* then has an ultimate place to reside, the world's difficulties, and each and every person's strains and worries along with it, will be no more. The suffering vanishes--for it has no further place. We should remember that we are davening to Hashem here not only for removing *one person's pain and woes* (even if it may be yours), but *each and every person's*--and not only for a minute or a day or a year--**but for eternity!** Let's Daven Well!

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With the return of our Shoftim and Yoatzim, all *Yagon* and *Anacha* will depart from our lives, which as we learned yesterday, is the basis for the words *V'haser Mimeni Yagon V'Anacha*. There are even more incredible results. At that time as well, *U'Mloch Aleinu Atta Hashem Levadecha BeChesed U'Verachamim V'Tzaddekeinu BaMishpat*--everyone in the world will realize that it is Hashem, and only Hashem, Who rules over us, His people, with unique Hashgacha Pratis--with Chesed and Rachamim. One will note that this very special concept of *U'Mloch Aleinu Atta Hashem Levadecha* is even prominent in our Tefillos in the Yomim Noraim where we emphasize **these very words** in the "*U'Vechain...*" in the third bracha of the Yamim Noraim Shemone Esrei. Now, Hashem will rule over us for all to see--but what is the difference between Chesed and Rachamim mentioned in this bracha? We present two alternative explanations. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* explains that Hashem's Chesed will bring goodness upon us even if we have insufficient merit, and His Rachamim will prevent us from being punished in a manner which would otherwise be in accordance with our deeds. HaRav Schwab explains that Hashem will rule over us BeChesed while this world is still in existence, and later BeRachamim--in the world of Techiyas HaMeisim. According to both explanations, our Tefillos here are qualitatively expansive, and eternally everlasting. It is not Chesed and Rachamim for now--**it is forever!**

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We conclude our Bracha with the request of *V'Tzaddekeinu BaMishpat*--and find us righteous in judgment. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains the relationship between Tzedek and Mishpat. Mishpat is the strict letter of the law, whatever it may be--as it is written 'on the books'. Tzedek, on the other hand, represents factors which could (although they need not be) taken into account to mitigate the Mishpat such as affliction, poverty, bad influences, etc. We ask Hashem to bring Tzedek into our Mishpat. Why would He do this? It is because we bring Tzedek into our Mishpat--that is, we judge other people favorably, beyond the situation, beyond the circumstances of what happened or what he did. In this bracha, then, we are reminding ourselves that even if we are not judges sitting behind the table or bench, that we too act as judges every day--and that the way *we judge* will be the way *we are judged*. With this, we can understand the conclusion of the Bracha--*Melech Oheiv Tzedaka U'Mishpat*--the King who loves imparting Tzedaka into Mishpat. The term 'love' in this bracha, as HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita in the name of the Bach explains, refers to Hashem's love of seeing us act with Tzedaka in our Mishpat--by judging others favorably. He, in turn, can judge us favorably as well! Hakhel Note: This is the only bracha in Shemone Esrei that concludes with the term love--let us value it properly(!)

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The Rabbeinu Yonah to Brachos writes that there are those who are very mistaken in our current Golus and c'v believe, because of the sufferings of exile, that Hashem has forsaken us, and does not watch over us. The phrase of *VeHaser Mimeni Yagon VeAnacha* refers to this Yagon and Anacha in Galus from which c'v people have erred. At the time of the Geulah, however, **it will be clear for all to see that Hashem rules over us with Chesed and Rachamim, with Tzedek and Mishpat**. Accordingly, we are praying for the day when the sorry misconceptions depart, and all recognize Hashem's true essence--an essence that was there all along!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

We continue with our study of the Nineteen Brachos of Shemone Esrei. This week we focus on the Eleventh Bracha of Shemone Esrei--**Hashiva Shofteinu--Restoring of Justice**. The *Seder HaYom* writes that for so long as we are in Galus we cannot fulfill the Mitzvos and the study of Torah properly because of the *tzaros* and agonies that we face. In this bracha, therefore, we daven to Hashem that He rid us of *Yagon Va'Anacha*--sorrow and groan--and this will be accomplished through the establishment of the Sanhedrin, and that the Chachomim reestablish themselves as those who give the proper advice to our people in both Ruchniyus and Gashmiyus. HaRav Chaim Kanievksy, Shlita, points out that the first phrase of the bracha: *Hashiva Shofetinu KiVarishona V'Yoatzeinu KeVatechilah* is clearly based on the Pasuk in Yeshaya ( 1:26 ): *V'Hashiva Shoftayich Kevarishona V'Yoatsayich KiVatechilah*. The G'ra actually teaches that the *Shoftim* we are referring to are Dovid and Shlomo, and the *Yoatzyim* are Moshe and Aharon themselves who will return to give us their sage advice. Hakhel Note: Let us reflect upon this incredible leadership that we will have. We can then truly understand why we will no longer have any *Yagon V'Anacha*! **May it come speedily and in our day.**

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The Siddur *Otzar HaTefillos* brings from the Levush that the Malochim recited our bracha of “*Baruch Atta Hashem Melech Ohev Tzedaka U'Mishpat*” at the time that Moshe taught Bnei Yisrael the Parsha in the Torah of Mishpatim. Every letter of the Aleph Bais is found in this Bracha--except for the ‘Zayin’ which (among other things) represents our seven great leaders (the Ushpizin)--how exact our Brachos are! The reason this Bracha comes immediately after the ingathering of our exiles is because Hashem will punish those who must be punished before we settle in Yerushalayim (as described in a coming bracha). Additionally, we require a Sanhedrin as soon as possible in our Geulah process because the ***Ikar Hashra'as HaShechina is through the Sanhedrin***. It is for this reason that the *Lishkas HaGazis*, which housed the Sanhedrin HaGadol, was located in the Bais HaMikdash itself. We note the stark similarity in brachos between the opening of our Bracha for Teshuvah: “***Hashiveinu Avinu LeSorasecha***”--and our Bracha now to restore our leadership--“***Hashiva Shofetinu KiVarishona***”. We suggest that there is a great lesson here which may not be so evident--**that is, we need to have our Avos and Neviim of the past before us**--in order to fully attain our quest that HaRav Wachtfogel so urged us to seek ***Masai Yagiyah Ma'asi LeMa'asei Avosai***. **The living lessons in front of us will serve as our greatest reminders of who we are, where we come from, and what we can attain!** Let us sincerely pray now for these days!

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In the Bracha we ask that Hashem remove from us both *Yagon* and *Anacha*. What is the difference between *Yagon* and *Anacha*? The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* brings that *Yagon* is worry and troubled concern, whereas *Anacha* is a feeling that comes from actual *tzaros* that the person is experiencing. **All of this will be gone when true Torah leadership is restored to our land, our people and to the world.** The next phrase, which is seemingly innocuously placed here actually goes to the core of our Davening on the Yamim Noraim! “*U'Mloch Aleinu Atta Hashem Levadecha B'Chesed U'VeRachamim V'Tzadekeinu BaMishpat*.” Here, we ask that Hashem's singular rulership become evident to the entire world, and that, moreover, all see once

and for all that Hashem acts *with Chesed* (i.e., even when we do not have Zechusim), *with Rachamim* (i.e., not punishing us for what we have done), and with *Tzedek B'Mishpat* (i.e., His finding us innocent in our deeds below, so that we will not have to face the heavenly court for punishment any time in the future). Just as our recitation of Aleinu at the end of davening should remind us of the Malchiyos that we recite on the Yamim Noraim, so too, should this request for Hashem's peaceful, kind and singular rulership over us cause us to instill within ourselves a new striving and sincerity in the middle of our Shemone Esrei!

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**With HaRav Elyashiv no longer with us in this world, this Bracha to restore our Judges and Counselors takes on a more direct and personal meaning.** The Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* writes that when reciting the bracha of *Hashiva Softeinu*, one should place upon his heart that Hashem return the Sanhedrin **who are the Kisei Hashem**--Hashem's throne--to us. As long as the Sanhedrin were in their place, they taught us the Torah She'Be'al Peh, quashed Machlokes, and kept the knowledge of Torah She'Be'al Peh up to a high standard amongst K'lal Yisroel. Moreover, they performed outstanding Chesed to *resha'im* whom they punished in this world--saving them from being punished in the next world(for instance, by giving a person lashes, thereby saving him from *kareis*). As the *Ya'aros Devash* concludes: "*BeZema'an SheHaDayanim Kesheirim--HaBracha Sheruyah BaOlam!*"

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The Bracha concludes with: *Baruch Atta Hashem Melech Oheiv Tzedaka U'Mishpat*. Hashem loves to do Tzedakah even while exercising justice. HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z'tl, (*HaRav Schwab on Prayer*) insightfully teaches that because we realize that Hashem's Heavenly Judgment is so influenced by His Tzedakah, we may be complacent in our efforts to do Teshuvah. It is for this reason that during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah we end this Bracha with *HaMelech HaMishpat*, rather than *Melech Oheiv Tzedaka UMishpat*--for during this period, we must apply a much stricter standard of mishpat to ourselves if we are to expect Rachamim from HaKadosh Baruch Hu. HaRav Schwab then beautifully concludes: The Torah tells us *BeTzedek Tishpot Amisecha*--judge your fellow man with righteousness (Vayikra 19: 15). Our Chachomim learn from here *Hevei Dan Es Chavericha LeChaf Zechus* (Shavuos 30a). If a person sees another doing something which, on the surface, appears wrong, he should not assume the worst, but rather, he should 'judge' him favorably in his own mind. Although the average person is not a judge, nevertheless, we all form our own opinions, 'judgments', of our fellow man. It is in this sense that we say to HaKadosh Baruch Hu in this Bracha, *VeTzadekeinu BaMishpat*. Since now--before the Geulah--we do not have the high caliber of judges and advisors to lead and advise us how to avoid our pitfalls, because we are an orphaned and leaderless people, we ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu to judge us favorably, to judge us Lechaf Zechus and thereby to apply Tzedakah to our Mishpat!

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The Rabbeinu Yonah to Brachos writes that there are those who are very mistaken in our current Golus and c'v believe, because of the sufferings of exile, that Hashem has forsaken us, and does not watch over us. The phrase of *VeHaser Mimenu Yagon VeAnacha* refers to this Yagon and Anacha in Galus from which c'v people have erred. At the time of the Geulah, however, **it will**

**be clear for all to see that Hashem rules over us with Chesed and Rachamim, with Tzedek and Mishpat.** Accordingly, we are praying for the day when the sorry misconceptions depart, and all recognize Hashem's true essence--an essence that was there all along!

## **12. VELAMALSHINIM**

In the Bracha of *VeLamalshinim*, we ask Hashem to remove from our midst any and all heretical teachings and thoughts, so that all will in unison wholeheartedly believe in the Torah SheBichsav and the Torah Shebe'al Peh. The Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* writes that when reciting the words *U'Malchus Zaton/ VeHazeidim* we should have in mind that we are davening for the destruction of Amalek (who attack us *be'zaton*). In fact, the *Ya'aros Devash* writes that we fulfill a Mitzvas Asei from the Torah of *Zachor Eis Asher Asah Lecha Amalek when we have this Kavannah*. We should feel an enmity in our hearts for Amalek, and pray that the enemies of Hashem and His people receive their just punishment (including any punishment we would deserve--for our sins stem from and through them), and that any bounty that they have or are to receive should flow through to us from Hashem's Hand, *Kime'az U'Mikedem*--as in previous days.

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*Birkas HaMinim* is really the 19<sup>th</sup> Bracha of Shemone Esrei, as it was instituted after the Churban, in Yavneh (Brachos 28B). Thus, it seems to directly relate to our condition post-Churban, during which we are inundated by heretical thoughts and philosophies, and face enemies from within and without. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains that we accordingly first begin with *Velamalshinim Al Tehi Sikva*--may all of those who are antagonistic to Torah, who falsify reports against us and who antagonize or act with antagonism towards us, have no success or hope in their endeavors. Furthermore, *Vechol HaRisha KeRegah Toveid*. We do not daven necessarily that the evildoers be eradicated, but that the evil itself will be eliminated not over time--but KeRegah--immediately. Our plea for the immediate destruction of evil, HaRav Friedlander writes, exactly parallels our Tefilla on the Yomim Noraim of '*Vechol HaRisha Kula KeAshan Tichleh*'--i.e., that Risha be destroyed immediately--going up in smoke so that the world at large will acknowledge its fallacy. Even in these 'modern times', we have movements to ban Shechita here, and Bris Melah there. Even in these 'modern times' we have leaders of Jewish sects who do not believe c'v that the Torah is from Hashem, and who aver that they do not await our return to the Avodah of the Bais HaMikdash. Succinctly stated, we have needed this Bracha over the last 2,000 years--and we need it now. Perhaps when the Bais HaMikdash is rebuilt...we can revert back to 18 Brachos. May we find out in our day. In the interim, let us be sure we impart all of the Kavannah that we can into this timely Bracha!

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We have already mentioned that according to the Sefer *Ya'aros Devash*, we fulfill a Mitzvas Asei when we mention the *zeidim*, and our prayer for their destruction in this bracha. Actually, we ask that Hashem punish the *zeidim* in four different ways (in Nusach Ashkenaz, in Nusach Sfarad additional punishments are asked for as well). Specifically, we ask that Hashem should *Se'aker, Seshaber, Semager, and Sachniah* the *zeidim*. HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z'tl, in the monumental work *Rav Schwab on Prayer* ( a must for everyone's home) explains that these four verbs represent four different types of punishments:

- *Se'aker*--means to uproot, to prevent any future growth. It is our Tefillah that any movement that attempts to take Jews away from Judaism--either by force or persuasion--shall be uprooted and grow no further.
- *Seshaber*--means that they should break into various factions thus rendering them ineffective in their evil objective.
- *Semager*--is our Tefillah that they be cut into small pieces. (Hakhel Note: a Rav once noted that he does not know what *Semager* means--but it certainly does not sound good!)
- *Sachniah*--means to humble them, so that any remaining individual *zaidim* are humbled and rendered harmless. Hakhel Note: Even with respect to Yerushalayim, we only once ask that Hashem hurriedly return (*Meheirah*) the *Kisei Dovid* there. Yet, with respect to this Tefillah against the *zaidim*--within this one phrase we ask that Hashem take care of them *Meheirah* and then again *BiMeheirah V'Yameinu*. This is how urgent our request is. We add that a Rav once explained that *V'Yameinu* means not only in one's own lifetime but in *our* lifetime, including the lifetime of even the eldest among us!

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We conclude this bracha with the words *Shover Oyvim U'Machniya Zaidim*. It is important for us to recognize that just as a Kiddush Hashem results from the Bnei Yisroel who miraculously leave Mitzrayim, there is equal Kiddush Hashem in the destruction of our enemies at Kriyas Yam Suf and in the wars to conquer Eretz Yisroel. In this Bracha,

we strive not for violence, not for the vanquishment of others, but to bring the world to its purpose. We have all kinds of enemies, we have the *Malshinim* (those that slander us), we have the *Minim* (the heretics), we have the people like Amaleik who are out for our physical destruction--even for our obliteration. All of these are not only our enemies, but are Hashem's enemies as well. With the destruction of the tumah that they represent, more Kedusha is brought into the entire world. It is perhaps for this reason that this Bracha is particularly placed in between the bracha of *Hasheva Shofteinu* and *Al HaTzaddikim*, both of which represent bringing greater Kedusha into the world through the Gedolim Olam we are davening for there. We must eradicate the evil, so that the good from all sides can shine forth. Hakhel Note: We reiterate that we mention the word *Meheira* more times in this bracha than in any other, for with the accomplishment of Sur Mei'rah *soon* we will be all the more close to the Aseh Tov which we so desperately await. Let us pause for a moment--at each *Meheira* with the Kavannah that it happen *speedily!*

----- **SECOND SET** -----

The Levush writes that this bracha corresponds to the bracha recited by the Malochim at Kriyas Yam Suf--“*Baruch Atta Hashem Shover Oyvim U'Machnia Zaidim*--which they recited when the Mitzriyim were drowning at sea.” The first phrase of the Bracha is: “*VeLamalshinim Al Tehi Sikvah*--and for the slanderers let there be no hope.” HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that this is not necessarily a curse against the slanderers--but a plea to Hashem that the slanderers not see the fruits of their slander, and thus cease to slander on their own. However, to the extent any *Malshin* is a *Mosser*, that *Malshin* does have the Halacha of a *rodef*, and it is a Mitzvah to kill him rather than allow oneself to be killed. Although the bracha does address our non-Jewish

enemies later as well, the *Eitz Yosef* points out that the *Malshinim* here are the heretics within our people, those that do not believe in Torah Shebichsav and Torah Shebe'al Peh. Hakhel Note: We know so many of our brethren who are unaffiliated, or who ascribe to denominations under the term 'Judaism', which do not believe in Torah MiSinai and the other basics of our faith. Although the leaders of these denominations may be more 'educated' and disbelieve maliciously or at least recklessly, many of their followers are simply ignorant of true Torah beliefs. If we can use HaRav Kanievsky's explanation, and pray with the words *Al Tehi Sikvah* that our 'educated' and uneducated brethren realize that there is no hope in their misbeliefs and disbeliefs--we can bring them back to the point that they too may recite the other 18 Brachos of Shemone Esrei. May it be speedily and in our day!

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The next phrase is "*Vechol HaRisha KeRega Toveid*--and may all wickedness perish in an instant." The *Sefer Sifsei Chaim* points out that we do not ask for the wicked to perish--but for the wickedness to vanish. This is based upon Chazal who teach that Dovid HaMelech asked: "*Yitamu Chataim Min Ha'aretz*--that sin be expunged from the earth--and not the sinners." The *Sifsei Chaim* also points out that the language here is strikingly similar to the language we recite on the Yamim Noraim: "*Vechol HaRisha KeAshan Tichleh*"--where we ask that all evil go up in smoke. All of this will happen when the world realizes Hashem's authority--as then all of the designs of those fighting against that authority are shown to be nothing more than a smoke screen which suddenly dissipates. The next phrase is "*VeChol Oyvecha Meheirah Yikareisu*" in which we pray that the enemies of Hashem, which are the enemies of K'lal Yisrael, are removed **without achieving their intentions**. In Shemone Esrei we infrequently use the word '*Meheirah*'--quickly. Whenever we do, teaches the *Sifsei Chaim*, it is because we are emphasizing that any delay in fulfilling our request causes Chilul Hashem, and--when our request is met, Kiddush Hashem will immediately result. We daven for Kiddush Hashem--let us do so with full intent and sincerity!

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We continue with the phrase "*V'Hazeidim Meheirah Se'aker U'Seshaber U'Semager V'Sachinah BeMeheirah V'Yameinu*--and may the purposeful evildoers be quickly uprooted, smashed, thrown down, and humbled speedily and in our day. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* explains that the *Zaydim* are those who make Tzaros for K'lal Yisrael. HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z'tl, includes the practice of communism and missionary practices (including the fundamentalists) as examples of *Zaydim*--for they intentionally fight against Torah and the Jewish religion. We, of course, can include the leaders of certain Mideastern and other countries within the category of *Zaydim* against our people--and daven for the *Se'aker, Seshaber...* of each and every one of them. It is extremely important to realize (as we have noted in the past) that within our one phrase we reference the word *Meheirah*--quickly--twice! The second time we ask that it be *BeMeheirah V'Yameinu*--not only quick from a historical perspective--but so quick that it happens in our times so that we ourselves can see the Kavod Shomayim that results! One additional point: There are, of course, real differences between *Se'aker, Seshaber...* (in Nusach Sefard there are even more)--and we should accordingly *feel the difference* of the simple meaning of each word as we recite it.

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We conclude the Bracha with the words “*Baruch Atta Hashem Shover Oyvim U’Machniyah Zaydim*--who breaks enemies and humbles the intentional sinners.” HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, writes that by the breaking of our enemies we mean *Ad LeKilyon*--to their total destruction. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, points out that enemies must be *broken* because they want to harm us directly, while *Zaydim* are broad-based *Reshaim* and therefore *humbling* them may be sufficient. HaRav Schwab, Z’tl, provides a slightly different explanation as to why we specifically ask that our enemies be *broken* and that the evildoers be *humbled*. *Oyvim* means enemies who wish to destroy us physically--they must be broken. *Zaydim* refers to the evildoers who wish to destroy us spiritually. If they are humbled, they will not have the audacity to attempt to proselytize us. What we are asking for here is that eventually all the movements that are bent on destroying the Jewish people--physically or spiritually--be eliminated. Rav Schwab concludes that this Bracha is said in the present tense--as if it is happening now--because we have absolute faith that this will be realized!

### **13. AL HATZADDIKIM**

HaRav Yonasan Eibeshutz, Z’tl, writes that this bracha especially reminds us that we must daven for our Tzaddikim. As HaRav Eibeshutz writes “*Vechol Zeman SheTzaddikim BaOlam, Bracha VeTova BaOlam.*” In fact, we mention five different groupings of great people at the outset of the Bracha--Tzaddikim, Chassidim, Zikeinim, Pleitas Sofreihem, and Gerei HaTzeddek. One can definitely think about or visualize the five different kinds of great people who are encompassed by this bracha. For instance, when reciting “*VeAl Ziknei Amecha Beis Yisroel,*” we can think about our Zikeinim and that we are davening to Hashem that He give them life and good health. The *Seder HaYom* writes that we are really moving up in ascending order through the five groupings, as the Ger Tzeddek represents an epitome, having raised himself up from being wholly unaffiliated with the Jewish people, to his current position. HaRav Eibeshutz adds that when mentioning the term Gerei Tzeddek, we should reflect upon our love for him/them and be Mekayeim the Mitzvah DeOraysa of VeAhavtem Es HaGer! After we mention this wonderful list--beginning with the Tzaddikim and ending with the Gerei Tzeddek--we add ourselves--*V’Aleinu* for Hashem’s consideration. What a precious opportunity it is to be able to add ourselves to this great list!

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The Kuntres *Avodas HaTefillah* brings the Midrash (Tanchuma, Parashas Shmini 11) which teaches “just as a bird cannot fly without wings--so too can K’lal Yisroel not function without our Zekanim”. We therefore ask that Hashem arouse His Mercy (Yehemu NaRachamecha) upon them--for they are needed by us all. We also ask that Hashem arouse His Mercy on the *Pleitas Sofreihem*. Who are they? The Kuntres explains that they are the remainder of the Talmidei Chachomim who are Osek BaTorah and the Melamdei Tinokos--the teachers of school children who deserve our special mention. Together with these great group--we are allowed to add **ourselves** with the word *VeAleinu*. We demonstrate that we want to be in the right company--and thus plead to be treated likewise. What a powerful opportunity!

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According to the Sefer *BeRumo Shel Olam*, there are 42 words in the bracha, corresponding to the 42 letters in the Pasuk of VaAvarecha Mevorechecha (Bereishis 12:3). The *BeRumo Shel Olam* also brings the teaching of the Tur that this bracha contains **every letter** of the Aleph Bais. We ask Hashem that he have complete mercy on us all. We then plead with Hashem to give a “Sachar Tov L’chol HaBotchim B’Shimcha B’Emes--a good reward for those who truly believe in You.” The Steipler Gaon, Z’tl notes that every Mitzvah that one performs will be rewarded in Olam Habah--why would the Mitzvah of Bitachon be any different? What are we asking for here? He answers that we are not requesting reward in Olam Habah with these words. Rather, as Dovid Hamelech teaches us in Tehillim (32:10), “Haboteach BaHashem Chesed Yesovivenu--one who trusts in Hashem is surrounded by kindness.” Likewise, as the Navi (Yirmiyahu 17:7) writes, “Boruch Hagever...Vehaya Hashem Mevtacho--blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem, then Hashem will be his security.” In these Pesukim, both Dovid Hamelech and Yirmiyahu Hanavi are teaching us the greatness of Bitachon--even if we do not merit, even if we are not otherwise worthy of, Hashem’s Chesed or Security, He may in any event save us in the zechus of our true Bitachon in Him! Let us appreciate the power of Bitachon--and the importance of our plea!

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The bracha next continues with the words *Vesim Chelkeinu Imahem Leolam--and place our lot with them* (the great persons). HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, explains that with these words we make a deep and profound request--that, just as with the Tzaddikim, the Chassidim, etc. true spiritual values guide their life--so to should our lives not be guided by the material and the mundane, but by the matters that are LeOlam--for eternity. To bring the point--and the importance of the plea--home to us clearly, the Anshei Knesses HaGedola now add the words *VeLo Naivosh Ki Vecha Votachnu--so we will not feel ashamed, because we trust in you*. HaRav Friedlander writes that shame even in this world is one of the greatest punishments and *yissurin* that a person can experience--even if it is only temporary, and in front of someone who you don’t know well. Imagine, then, the unparalleled *yissurin* of shame in front of the Heavenly Court -- and certainly in front of one’s Maker! By putting ourselves together with the special people in this bracha, we recognize and affirmatively assert that it is not only technical Mitzvah performance that is important--**but it is the value, the aforethought, the kavannah, the care, the completeness of the Mitzvah that we seek as well**. We don’t want there to be a difference between the way a ‘good person’ does a Mitzvah and the way we do! After davening for this eternally great goal--we should try to put it into practice when performing a Mitzvah. Try to daven Shemone Esrei, Learn or do a Chesed or any of the 613 Mitzvos--like you think Rav A, B or C would!

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The Bracha concludes with the words *Baruch Atta Hashem Mishan U’Mivtach LaTzaddikim*. What is the meaning, what is the difference between *Mishan* and *Mivtach*? The outstanding Sefer *Talilei Oros* on Tefillah provides several beautiful explanations:

- a. The *Eitz Yosef* suggests that *Mishan* refers to Hashem’s support of us in our Golus in Olam Hazei, as the Pasuk states ‘*Yekadmuni VeYom Eidi VeYehi Hashem **LeMishan** Li--they confronted me on the day of misfortune (i.e. Golus), and Hashem was a support for me*’ (Tehillim 18:19). *Mivtach*, however, describes the future--the days of Moshiach and Olam Haba.

b. The *Eitz Yosef* also suggests that Hashem is a *Mishan*--protecting us from the Yetzer Hara when He sees that we are truly sincere, yet He is a *Mivtach*--He gives one a full reward for defeating the Yetzer Hara--as if He had no part in it!

c. Hashem gives to those who are Boteiach in Him a *Mishan*, assistance to further strengthen them in their Bitachon. This was evidenced, for instance, by the Bnei Yisroel who saw the *Eser Makkos* while still in Mitzrayim--before they even left--in order to bolster the Bitachon they had demonstrated by crying out to Hashem in the first place. Similarly, with the Nes of Purim, first Haman led Mordechai around on the royal horse *before* the party in which Haman was brought down, in order to bolster the people's Bitachon as they prayed for Esther's success at the party. So too in the future, teaches *Rabbeinu Avrohom Ben HaGra*, Hashem will show Nissim V'Niflaos before the final Geulah --in order for our Bitachon to be '*Meleah V'Shaleim*' in Hashem. Please daven at this point that this new demonstration of *Mishan* should occur speedily and in our days!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

We begin with the first phrase of: "*Al HaTzadikim VeAl HaChassidim VeAl Ziknei Amecha Bais Yisrael*--on the righteous, on the devout, and on the elders of Your people, the family of Israel". The *Sefer Avudraham* notes a special difference between Tzadikim and Chassidim. He writes that the *Tzadikim* are Gedolim who have not tasted the taste of sin, having consistently and continuously fulfilled all of the Mitzvos and laws as set forth in Shulchan Aruch, whereas the *Chassidim* are Ba'alei Teshuvah who, in order to avoid sins similar to those that they have committed in the past, must take on special additional precautions and fences. The difference between a Tzadik and a Chassid can thus be compared to one who has not been sick and thus has no restrictions on his diet, as compared to one who has been ill and must be careful not to eat certain items. The *Eitz Yosef* provides a second explanation of the difference between Tzadikim and Chassidim--*Tzadikim* are the Shomrei Mitzvos, while *Chassidim* are those who do an abundant amount of Ma'asim Tovim--great *Ba'alei Chesed*. The *Zekeinim* are, of course, the Chachomim who lead us. The reason, explains the *Eitz Yosef* that the term *Amecha Bais Yisrael* is appended to the description of the **Zekeinim** and not to the Tzaddikim or the Chassidim is because through their Da'as Torah they keep the Bais Yisrael--the family of Israel --going. **With the words of Amecha Bais Yisrael we remind ourselves to express our Hakaras HaTov by davening for them.** Hakhel Note: We should certainly have specifically in mind the Gedolim of our generation when reciting these words.

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We continue with the phrase: "*VeAl Pleitas Sofreihem VeAl Geirei HaTzedek V'Al einu Yehemu Rachamecha Hashem Elokeinu*--and for the remnant of the scholars, the righteous converts, and on ourselves, may Your mercy be aroused, Hashem our G-d." HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that the Talmidei Chachomim are called *Sofrim* because they count all of the words and letters in the Torah (Kiddushin 30A), and they are the remnants of the original Talmidei Chachomim of prior years. The *Eitz Yosef* explains that the term *Sofrim* here refers to those who write Seforim. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, points out that because we are the She'eiris

HaPleitah--the remnants of our people, we are blessed with the remnants of the Talmidei Chachomim to lead us--every generation having scholars befitting it (*Dor Dor V'Dorshav*). Then, in addition to our pleading for the welfare of the Talmidei Chachomim, we ask that Hashem have mercy on the *Geirei Tzedek*, on the righteous converts who come to Yiddishkeit on their own and with a *Kavannah Tehorah*. The *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer* gives as an example the sailors on the ship of Yonah HaNavi--they converted because they saw with their own eyes Hashem's Hashgacha and strength, and for no other reason. They and their like are true *Geirei Tzedek*. We daven for them because there is a special Mitzvah to love Geirim (the Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* teaches that we fulfill the Mitzvah of *VeAhavtem Es HaGer* by having the Mitzvah in mind when davening for them here!) We then go on to include '*Aleinu*', ourselves--together with the *Tzaddikim, Chassidim, Zikeinim, Sofrim* and *Geirei Tzedek*--and even though we do not have the Ma'alos that they have--we ask Hashem, as *Hashem Elokeinu*, to infuse and sweeten His Middas HaDin with Rachamim upon all those listed within the Bracha, including ourselves. We at least associate ourselves with the right people, demonstrating that this is where our aspirations lie. HaRav Shimon Schwab, Z'tl, provides a beautiful explanation of the use of the word *Yehemu* (which we translated as 'aroused', based upon the Artscroll Siddur), which he translates as 'activated': "*We know that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is Malei Rachamim, mercy per se, but we do not always feel His mercy. The Rachamim of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, like the air that we breathe, is always there--we could not live without it. However, we feel the air only when the wind blows. We ask here that HaKadosh Baruch Hu make His mercy evident to all of the aforementioned!*" Hakhel Note: Our references of HaRav Schwab's words cannot serve as a replacement for studying his entire monumental Sefer on Tefillah *Rav Schwab on Prayer* (Artscroll)--an absolutely essential work for every home.

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We continue with the phrase: "*Visein Sachar Tov Lechol HaBotechim BeShimcha B'Emes*--and give good reward to all who truly believe in Your Name." HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, asks a pointed question--why do we ask for reward--certainly we know that Hashem will reward those who deserve it? Do we need to *c'v* remind Hashem about reward?! Rashi teaches us more than once in Chumash: "*Ani Hashem--Ne'eman LeShaleim Sechar*--Hashem tells us that He is trustworthy to give everyone his just rewards." It is for this reason that the Sefer *Iyun Tefillah* teaches that the 'good reward' here does not refer to reward in the usual sense for those who do good, but rather it is a request that those who demonstrate their belief in Hashem do not falter, so that all can see that those who believe in Him succeed, and do not fall away, embarrassed or ashamed. Thus, our request here is that Hashem fulfill the hopes of those who believe in Him, so that a Kiddush Hashem results--as all see that Hashem answers the request of those who believe in Him. The *Dover Shalom* explains in a different vein that we are making a request of Hashem on behalf of those who demonstrate their true bitachon in Him--that aside from listening to their please, Hashem reward them simply for truly believing in Him!

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The next phrase is: "*VeSim Chelkeinu Imahem LeOlam VeLo Neivosh Ki Vecha Batachnu*--put our lot with them forever, and we will not feel ashamed for we trust in You." HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains that by the word *LeOlam*, forever, we ask Hashem to guide us so that we live spiritual lives--for these are the values that **last forever** and do not change with the times. If we lead this kind of Ruchniyus-focused life, then we will never be embarrassed. How

does one primarily lead a spiritually focused life? This answer is in our Bracha as well--by *Ki Vecha Batachnu*--through his constant awareness of Hashem and his unfettered trust and *Deveikus* in Him. The *Sefer Ya'aros Devash* (brought in the *Eitz Yosef*) poignantly explains that when one is embarrassed merely in this world, it is before another human being, and the embarrassment will only last for a certain amount of time. Just as the shadow passes, so too will the embarrassment. This is not so for spiritual embarrassment--which will last in *Olam Haba* as well. Not only will the *Malachim* stay away from the person who is spiritually defiled, continues the *Ya'aros Devash*, but even the *Neshamos* of the relatives of that person will stand from afar and exclaim: "What have you done that you have brought such shame and disgrace upon yourself for all eternity?!" This is most certainly an embarrassment that we would all want to avoid--and *we can* if we act properly in this world. In our Bracha, we ask Hashem to help save us from this embarrassment through strengthening our *Bitachon* in Him--so that we will be spiritually successful forever!

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We conclude the Bracha with: "*Baruch Atta Hashem Mishan U'Mivtach LaTzaddikim*--...Mainstay and Assurance of the righteous" (Artscroll translation). What is the difference between *Mishan* and *Mivtach*? HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, points to the Malbim who explains the difference in Yeshaya (50:10) on the Pasuk "*Yivtach B'Sheim Hashem V'Yishan B'Eilokav*" (see there). In another vein, the *Eitz Yosef* explains that the term *Mishan* refers to Hashem's support of *Tzaddikim in Olam Hazeh*, and the term *Mivtach* refers to Hashem's trustworthiness to support the *Tzaddikim* in the times of *Moshiach* and in *Olam Habah*. Alternatively, *Mishan* refers to Hashem's support of us in our battles against the *Yetzer Hara*, while the term *Mivtach* assures us that in spite of all of Hashem's assistance in helping us fight the *Yetzer Hara*, He will reward us (if we take His assistance) in full--as if we did it all on our own! We suggest that according to either interpretation the meaning is that Hashem not only acts as a *Mishan*, as a cane for support--but also as a *Mivtach*--standing those who are deserving up on their own in this world--and for eternity!

## 14. V'LIRUSHALAYIM

Note: We provide the following note from an expert reader on proper pronunciation in this Bracha: "It is *V'Li.rushalayim* And NOT V'LiYerushalaim".] Although the whole world and every part of it belongs to Hashem, we specifically call *Yerushalayim Ircha*. With this, we place preeminence not on where *we* want to be, but rather where it is that *the Shechina* wants to uniquely reside in. We thus importantly demonstrate that it is the **Tza'ar HaShechina** that is a primary concern for us. Accordingly, even if we are undeserving, and even if it may be "better for us" if Hashem would wait for us to be deserving on our own --we nevertheless ask Hashem to return with His Mercy now so that the *Shechina* will finally come to its eternal resting place. It is certainly no coincidence (as it never is!) that our Program comes to this Bracha two weeks after *Tisha B'Av*, at a time when *Yerushalayim* could be fading a bit from our minds. This reminds us not to let it happen--we must keep *Yerushalayim* in the forefront every day of the year. We must remember that *Yerushalayim* is not just a city, a center, or geographic location on a map or globe. We had recently published the penetrating words of Rav Schwab, Z'tl, and we bring them again here below--so that any time we **say the word** *Yerushalayim* we note and if possible momentarily reflect upon its unparalleled and wondrous nature. *HaRav Schwab, Z'tl,*

asks why the bracha of “V’Lirushalayim Ircha” begins with a Vav (“And”). What is the meaning of “And” here--**to what is the beginning of the bracha connecting?** HaRav Schwab suggests that the Vav alludes to the Yerushalayim Shel Ma’alah, where thousands, and perhaps millions, of Tzadikim who hoped and prayed for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim over the past 2,000 years now reside. When the time comes for Yerushalayim to be rebuilt, these neshamos will experience it B’shamayim together with the people who are physically experiencing the rebuilding here on earth. Moreover, although we do not really understand what it means at this time, Chazal teach that Hashem will return to the Yerushalayim Shel Ma’alah only after He has returned to the Yerushalayim Shel Matah, for He has been “absent” from the Yerushalayim Shel Ma’alah since the Churban, as well. **We are thus mispallel for Hashem to return to both cities of Yerushalayim** (from the monumental work HaRav Schwab on Prayer published by Artscroll).

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Chazal (Megillah 17B) teach that the bracha for rebuilding Yerushalayim was placed by the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah after Al HaTzadikim because it is in Yerushalayim where the Tzaddikim will reach their epitome, as the Posuk declares (Tehillim 122:6) *Sha’alu Shelom Yerushalayim Yeshlayu O’Havayich*. Simply stated, the glory of the Tzadikim will not be revealed until they return to Yerushalayim upon its redemption. It is important to note that it is not only the Bais HaMikdash that we seek, but the building of the entire city. In his introduction to Tehillim Chapter 122 (Artscroll Tanach Series), Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer, Shlita, provides the following great insight into what Yerushalayim should mean to every individual:

*“This Perek describes the glory of Yerushalayim of old. As a city, it was different from all others. Generally, cities are no more than clusters of buildings where masses of people settle together for the sake of security or commercial convenience. As the urban multitude increases, the significance and value of the individual decreases. As the individual grows ever more dependent upon the services and the society of the masses, his personal stature is diminished, for his own worth and personal ability has less effect in society. This situation breeds friction and animosity in the metropolis and polarizes its citizens. This was not the case in Yerushalayim. There, every Jew experienced a personal encounter with Hashem. This encounter was a dramatic revelation which demonstrated to each and every man the special, divine nature of his soul. The crowds of Olei Regel which converged upon the city enhanced this realization of individuality and did not detract from it at all. For, just as no two faces are alike, no two minds are alike (Berachos 58a). Every additional pilgrim who arrived in the city gave further evidence to the diversity and uniqueness of Hashem’s creatures. Thus, the proliferation of the masses heightened the individual’s self esteem and lifted his spirits. This fostered brotherhood and unity in Yerushalayim, which came to be known as the city of peace, the city that is united together.”*

Hakhel Note: May we be zoche to feel the elevation as Olei Regel speedily and in our days. An essential way for us to get there is by davening for it in this bracha!

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In the Bracha, we first ask that Hashem bring his Shechinah back to Yerushalayim. Only then, do we continue with the next step of our plea--*U’Vnei Osah BiKarov BiYameinu Binyan Olam*. With these words, we ask that it be **Hashem Himself** who rebuilds Yerushalayim--**so that it stand permanently** (unlike the first and second Bais Hamikdash eras, when human were

involved in the building and which were only temporary). Fascinatingly, HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, points to the words in *Nacheim --Ki Atta Hashem BaAish Hitzata U'VaAish Atta Asid Levnosa...* Hashem You destroyed it in fire and with fire You will build it, as well. We don't know very well how to build a city with fire--**Hashem does**. The Ramchal actually explains that there is a deeper concept that lies here as well: It is not only that there will be a Yerushalayim above and a Yerushalayim below, but that the new 'rebuilding' will include Ruchniyus from above coming down to connect to the Ruchniyus below. Thus, although there will be a semblance of physical walls around, the Ruchniyus of the heavens above will actually have a place in this world. We then specifically ask that this incomparable and eternal rebuilding occur **B'Karov B'Yameinu**. HaRav Friedlander notes that there are two concepts here. First, we would like it to happen *B'Karov*--in the immediate future. Even, however, if it does not occur this hour or this day, we still plea that it happen *B'Yameinu--in our days while in Olam Haze!*

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Chazal (Bereishis Rabba 59:8) teach "*Yerushalayim Oro Shel Olam U'Mi Hu Oro Shel Yerushalayim--Hakasdosh Baruch Hu--Yerushalayim is the light of the world and Hashem Himself is the light of Yerushalayim.*" When reciting the bracha of Binyan Yerushalayim we should perhaps envision a great light--which is not only the light of Yerushalayim--but that, *keveyachol*, of Hashem Himself! Envision the great and infinite shine! If we are not such great 'visionaries', we can remember the words of the Avos to Rebbe Nosson that '*Yerushalayim Nikreis Chaim--Yerushalayim is called life itself!*' With this in mind, we move to the last portion of the Bracha, which at first glance may seem out of place. After davening for the return of the Shechina and for Yerushalayim's rebuilding, we ask that *Kisei Dovid Meheirah Lesocah Tachin*--that the throne of Dovid HaMelech should be speedily reestablished there. One would think that these words would be found in the next bracha of *Es Tzemach Dovid*--which refers to the reestablishment of the Malchus Bais Dovid. The Bach (to Tur Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 118) records that he was actually asked this Shailah and explains that the re-establishment of Dovid's throne is very much part of the Bracha over Yerushalayim. In fact, these words *are and should be the concluding words of the Bracha*--because Yerushalayim's rebuilding would be incomplete without the Moshiach and the Malchus Bais Dovid reestablished. We are not looking for our own capital city, or even an international capital of the world. We are looking for the City of Hashem to be the place from which the Malchus Bais Dovid brings, maintains, and propagates the Malchus Hashem on His Nation, and on the world. Yerushalayim will not be a physical city of skyscrapers, housing tens of millions, but will be the seat of Ruchniyus given to us by Hashem, as transmitted by the Malchus Bais Dovid. In a very positive way we should almost 'get the chills' from the wondrous and wonderful message and meaning of this bracha--let us pray that it is filled **in its entirety** very soon!

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The bracha of *Bonei Yerushalayim* is of course, very close to the bracha in Bentsching of *Bonei B'Rachamav Yerushalayim*. Both brachos are obviously based on the Pasuk (Tehillim 147:2) which we recite daily in Pesukei DeZimra: *Bonei Yerushalayim Hashem Nidchei Yisroel Yechaneis*. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, notes that there are those who suggest that perhaps this Pasuk has already been fulfilled in our day--as one looks around Yerushalayim. He notes, however, that Yerushalayim during the time of the Shalosh Regalim had millions of Jews whose focus was on the Bais HaMikdash. Today, so many of the *batei avodah zara* and *tifla* are

disproportionately located in and around the city, with all the bells and noises associated with them. Moreover, on the streets themselves it is difficult to walk in various areas because of the *pritzus* of the uninitiated. On top of it all, our enemies freely trample over the Makom HaMikdash, even claiming rulership over it--and destroying and unearthing the Makom even further. So what, then, is the Bonei Yerushalayim of our day? As we have noted in the past, the rebuilding of Yerushalayim is a process that began at the time of its destruction, and it is proceeding in detailed stages which will be clear to us when the building is finally complete. HaRav Friedlander gives the Mashal of a contractor building a huge building. First, he must bring initial equipment and supplies--for without them you cannot work. Every stage of the building process requires new equipment and new supplies. Every generation is a new stage in the ongoing process of *Bonei Yerushalayim*. Let us daven in this bracha that our Mitzvos and Ma'asim Tovim bring us to the stage of the last shipment of supplies--and the building's so long for and awaited Eternal Opening!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

Rebbi Yonasan Eibishitz, Z'tl, writes in the Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* that Yerushalayim is called a *Kisei Hashem*, and poignantly asks: "If the Malochim above call out with cries and lamentations day and night over the Churban Yerushalayim, if the Malochim of the heavens are *Aveilei Tzion*, then how could we be silent and not cry over the Chillul Hashem of Churban Yerushalayim and the current loss of Malchus Bais Dovid?!" We begin with the phrase: "*V'lirushalayim Ircha B'Rachamim Tashuv*--and to Yerushalayim Your City return with mercy." HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, teaches that we emphasize that we are not asking for Hashem's return to His City for our sake--but rather we are asking for Hashem to return for *His Sake*--because it is *His City*. We know that as a result of His return anyone who travels there will be enveloped by its Kedusha and will be raised greatly in his level of Yiras Shomayim (see Bava Basra 21A, Tosfos d'h *Ki MiTzion*). By specifically asking Hashem that He return **with mercy**, we are asking for His **Midas HaRachamim** to overtake and overcome His Midas HaDin. **After all, Yerushalayim has sunk from being the loftiest city on earth to a place beset by tumah and tumos of all kinds--Wo unto some of what our eyes must behold in contemporary Yerushalayim!** Finally, when we daven for Yerushalayim, we notice there the bracha begins with a 'Vav'. Some explain that is because we are davening not only for the Yerushalayim here in this world, but also for the *Yerushalayim Shel Ma'alah*, which is inextricably bound with the Yerushalayim that we see.

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We continue with the phrase *VeSishkon Besocha Ka'asher Dibarta--and dwell in Yerushalayim as You had said*. The *Avnei Eliyahu* notes that the phrase following this one --*U'vnei Osah*--refers to the building of Yerushalayim, and pointedly asks--aren't things out of order, should not that request come first--once Yerushalayim is built, then and only then will the Shechina be able to dwell there?! One suggested answer is that Hashem in fact dwells in Yerushalayim right now--what we are davening for with the words ***VeSishkon Besocha* is that this remains the case until the Binyan Yerushalayim--for we know that we can take nothing for granted--and if we have been undeserving to have Yerushalayim rebuilt until this point, then c'v maybe we could lose our zechus to the Shechina.** (We had 'a taste' of this bitter pill when we were forced

to be distanced from the Shechina at the Kosel from 1948-1967.) This being the case, to what Pasuk are we referring to with the term *Ka'asher Dibarta*--as You had said? Based upon the foregoing thought, writes Rebbi Avraham Ben Hag'ra, the Pasuk is *Vehashimosi Es Mikdosheichem--I will make desolate your sanctuaries* (Vayikra 26:31), which Chazal explain teaches us that we will still have sanctuaries--the Shechina among us in some form --even after the Bais HaMikdash is destroyed. Indeed, explains HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, we must realize that the reason we cannot enter the *Makom HaMikdash* today is because of the Kedushas HaShechina which still rests there. Obviously, with a rebuilt Yerushalayim the Kedushas HaShechina at the same spot will grow in ways we cannot imagine. The Avudraham accordingly writes that we blend the phrase *VeSishkon Besocha* together with the next phrase of *U'Vnei osah*--the rebuilding of Yerushalayim--so that *Ka'asher Dibarta* refers to the future Yerushalayim--*Veshachanti Besoch Yerushalayim* (Zecharia 8:3). To bring the thoughts together--in this one phrase of *VeSishkon Besocha Ka'asher Dibarta* --we are davening for the Shechina to stay with us no matter what and that the Kosel remain the Kosel for us--and that we soon come to the day that we can feel and appreciate the Shechina in levels of Kedusha never before experienced!

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We continue with the next phrase: “*U'vnei Osah BeKarov BiMeheirah BeYameinu Binyan Olam*--may You rebuild it soon in our days as an everlasting structure.” Chazal teach that the Third Bais HaMikdash will descend from the Heavens complete, and when the Beis HaMikdash so descends the wall of Yerushalayim will then be built around it as well. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, brings the Ramchal, who provides us with great spiritual insight into this: “What will happen is that the *Beis HaMikdash Shel Ma'aleh* will spread itself out until it reaches the earth--it will not be uprooted, but will spread downward, and when it reaches its place here a physical wall will be built around it--and the two buildings--the physical wall of this world with the spiritual building which has descended will merge together as one. Thus, while there will be a physical Beis HaMikdash on the outside--the internal, spiritual Beis HaMikdash will be built as never before. There will no longer be a Beis HaMikdash above which is parallel to, and directly above, the Beis HaMikdash below--it will all be one! The actual city of Yerushalayim itself will be rebuilt by Hashem for eternity together with the Beis HaMikdash. Because neither Yerushalayim nor the Beis HaMikdash will be built by human hands--but by Hashem Himself, no future destruction will be possible--as Hashem's construction is per se eternal. The work of our hands is dependent on our deeds; the work of Hashem's 'hands' are not. Especially Important: We note that there are only two occasions in Shemone Esrei where we ask that Hashem do something “*BiMeheirah BeYameinu*--quickly and in our time”--**and this is one of them**. Let us especially focus on these words, as we ask Hashem for the culmination of the hopes of millions of Jews over more than nineteen centuries. It really can be in our time--and perhaps with just a little bit more Kavannah on our part--it will be *BiMeheirah BeYameinu*.

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We continue with the next phrase: “*V'Chisei Dovid Meheirah LeSocha Tachin*--and may You speedily establish the throne of Dovid within it.” Many ask: Why do we mention Dovid HaMelech here in the bracha of Yerushalayim--when the entire next bracha of *Es Tzemach*



*Dovid* is especially and specifically devoted to the reestablishment of the Malchus Beis Dovid?! The Bach (to Tur Orach Chaim 118) answers that in our Bracha we are asking that Yerushalayim be rebuilt--with the *end goal* that the throne of Dovid HaMelech be reestablished there--for that is *Yerushalayim B'Sheleimusah*--Yerushalayim in its true completeness. Yerushalayim is the *Ir Dovid*--a place that Dovid HaMelech and his descendants through the Moshiach Tzidkeinu are to serve as the earthly rulers. Why? Because their kingship is unlike the rulership of other kings. As Dovid HaMelech himself testifies (Brachos 4A!!), while the other kings were sleeping in the morning, he was busy answering Shailos for K'lal Yisrael and humbly submitting his rulings for review to his mentor, Mefiboshes. The king of K'lal Yisrael is really an Eved--an *Eved Hashem* who through his selfless actions brings the Shechina to rest upon us. Thus, with our request for the *Kisei Dovid* to be reestablished, we are not asking for K'lal Yisrael to rule over the world--we are asking that through the Malchus Beis Dovid, Hashem's presence in the world is felt to the most elevated extent possible. Our request for the *Kisei Dovid* is a request for the Shechina in *Yerushalayim B'Sheleimusah*. As we think of Yerushalayim, we are to think not only of beautiful, tall buildings, and awesome neighborhoods filled with the young and old alike--we must also think of the unparalleled spirituality of Yerushalayim--the Beis HaMikdash and the *Kisei Dovid-bringing us-the Shechina --Yerushalayim B'Sheleimusah!*

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We conclude the Bracha with: "*Boruch Atta Hashem Bonei Yerushalayim--the Builder of Yerushalayim.*" The Eitz Yosef points out that this is based on the Posuk that we recite daily in Pesukei D'Zimra--***Bonei Yerushalayim Hashem Nidchei Yisrael Yichaneis*** (Tehillim 147:2). The Dover Shalom, in turn explains that the Bracha is in the present tense because Yerushalayim is in the current process of rebuilding--as Golus is the initial stage of the Geulah, much in the way as the basement foundations are necessary for the tall building to stand. Moreover, as we recite in *Nacheim* on Tisha B'Av, Hashem destroyed Yerushalayim with fire and will be rebuild it with fire. How does Hashem 'build with fire'? The Dover Shalom explains that the fire He is rebuilding with is a spiritual one--created from our current actions--our Torah study, our fear of Heaven, and our Avodas Hashem! With our proper actions in the here and now--we are now contributing to the everlasting flame of the Eternal City!

## **15. ES TZEMACH DOVID**

Non-coincidentally, we reach this Bracha as we are about to take leave of Chodesh Menachem Av. Rabbi Heshy Kleinman, Shlita, reminded us of the following lesson-for-us-all (originally presented in Reb Shraga Feivel, by Yonasan Rosenblum (Artscroll p.110)):

*"One day Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz was teaching Tehillim, whose subject is the Jew's eternal pining for return to Jerusalem and the Temple that once stood there, "Nichsefa V'Gam Kalsa Nafshi--My soul yearns, indeed it pines for the courtyards of Hashem (Tehillim 84:3)."* When he reached the next Pasuk, *"Gam Tzippor Matza Vayis...--even the bird finds a home, and the free bird its nest,"* the tears ran down his cheeks, as he lamented, *"Everything has its place--except for the Shechina (the Divine Presence), which remains in exile."*

We suggest that while we recite the many brachos in Shemone Esrei three times a day relating to Galus and Geulah, when we recite the words “*Ki LiShuasecha Kivinu Kol HaYom,*” we should at least be moved to think about how desperately we need this Yeshua! Are we no less Jews than HaRav Shraga Feivel? Let us move ourselves in the same way he did--by simply taking a moment of reflection to think about it! As the Mesilas Yesharim (end of Chapter 19) teaches, our thoughts, our feelings, our prayers and our yearnings, mean very much in Shomayim, and it is our great obligation and privilege to bring ourselves, K'lal Yisroel, and the World--to where we are supposed to be!

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This bracha is the only bracha in Shemone Esrei that begins with the word *Es*, which is a word that is somewhat difficult to translate. We may at least suggest that it represents the great importance of this bracha--as it extends in scope from the aleph to the taf--spanning through the entire aleph bais to demonstrate the importance of the Moshiach to us. Why is the word *Tzemach* used in the bracha? The *Eitz Yosef* suggests that the name of Moshiach Ben Dovid is *Tzemach* (see Yirmiyah 23:5, and Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12). With the next phrase, *Dovid Avdecha--Dovid Your servant--*we convey that we are not hoping for Moshiach's arrival so that we, through the Malchus Bais Dovid, will rule over the world, but rather so that we, as led by Dovid *Avdecha*, will better serve You. In fact, HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, notes that on the Yomim Noraim we also daven for “*Utzemichas Keren L'Dovid Avdecha--*for this is the great purpose of Dovid in his kingship--to lead all of Klal Yisroel to *Ohl Malchus Shomayim* in its best and purest form!”

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HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, was asked what will happen to Shemone Esrei after the Moshiach comes--after all, do not so many brachos focus upon Geulah. If the Geulah arrives--what will we daven for then?! His response: “*Nizkeh, Nichyeh, V'Nireh!! Amein!*”

The Bracha of *Es Tzemach Dovid* continues with the words “*M'heirah Tzatzmiach.*” Sometimes plants grow and we do not notice them because the growth is slow and over time. We ask Hashem, who is All-Capable, to forgo the slow process and cause the Moshiach to sprout forth *Meheira--*quickly. We then emphasize, *V'Karno Tarum Bishuasecha* (notice pronunciation)--we will rejoice in Moshiach's coming because it will bring about a Yeshua for Hashem Himself, for we are pained that His Great Name has been profaned throughout this long and bitter Galus. **Once again, we are pointing out that it is Hashem's Yeshua that is foremost to us.** With this, we demonstrate that our response to the question *Tzipisah Lishua* is a real Yes--we eagerly await Yeshuas Hashem!

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The next phrase in this bracha is *Ki LiYeshuasechi Kivenu Kol HaYom*. The Yeshua to which we refer here is importantly two fold. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* brings the Mahari Tzemach that this refers to the Yeshuos of Hashem as He saves us from circumstances and events each and every day, (also including saving us from illness, keeping us healthy, healing us, giving us our daily needs, etc.). The second more commonly known explanation is to the ultimate Yeshua in which Hashem's people are finally and forever redeemed. The G'ra (Mishlei 10:28 ) explains

that the word 'Tikvah' (*Kivinu*) specifically refers to an anticipation of something happening immediately or in a very short time. Accordingly, it very much relates to the term 'Meheirah' used earlier in the bracha. Just as there are two different kinds of wonderful Yeshuos to which we refer, there are two different meanings to the concluding term in the bracha of 'Kol HaYom.' Some explain that the term 'Kol HaYom' literally means the whole day, and by this we indicate that the Yeshua is always at the top of our minds. Others, however, explain that the word 'HaYom' really refers to the expanse of our entire Golus, but that our anticipation is not the entire day--but rather Kol Yom, every day (for one cannot truthfully say that it is on the foremost of his mind every moment of the day). In either event, we note that the Sefer *Olas Tomid* writes that for every moment that one does in fact anxiously await the coming of Moshiach, **he fulfills two Mitzvos M'Divrei Kabbalah--Im Yisma'mah Chakei Lo Ki Vo Yavo** (Chabakuk 2:3) and *Lachein Chaku Li Ne'um Hashem* (Tzefanya 3:8)! Go to it!

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In this Bracha, the word *Keren*, or horn, is used twice--in the term '*VeKarno Tarum Bishuasecha*', and in the last words of the bracha--'*Matzmiach Keren Yeshua*'. Why is the term 'Keren' used? HaRav Shimon Schwab (in the classic *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, p.494-495), writes that the word *Keren* really has two meanings. First, meaning 'horn', it is a metaphor for power, just as an animal expresses its power by goring its perceived enemies with its horns. Second, the word *Keren* has the meaning of ray as in *Karan Ohr P'nei Moshe*--Bnai Yisroel could perceive the spiritual rays of light emanating from Moshe Rabbeinu. The Moshiach, too, will have a dual role. First, he will bring order into the world by eliminating the Reshaim (see Yeshaya 11:4). He will not be some sort of a 'superman' who will simply overpower the Reshaim, but rather will use Tefillah as his staff. Second, the Moshiach will bring spiritual rays and light to us. He will cause a mass movement of Teshuva and elevate us to a level of *V'Ameich Kulam Tzaddikim*. Hakhel Note: We may add that perhaps this is the reason that the term *Keren* is used twice in the bracha--once to indicate the obliteration of the Reshaim--and the other to raise us with his spiritual rays to new spiritual heights!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

The Levush writes that the Bracha of *Baruch Atta Hashem Matzmiach Keren Yeshuah* was recited by the Malochim when Bnei Yisrael crossed the Yam Suf and sang Shira. To us, however, it represents not only the Geulah from Mitzrayim--but the Geulah for all time. **This is the Bracha in which we directly daven for the Moshiach to come.** We begin with the first phrase of "*Es Tzemach Dovid Avdecha Meheirah Satzmiach*--may the offspring of Dovid Your servant speedily sprout." HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, definitively brings that the word *Tzemach* is one of the names of Moshiach (see Yirmiyah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8; and 6:12; and Eicha Rabba 1:51). Here, we refer to Dovid HaMelech as *Dovid Avdecha* because the purpose of Moshiach is not for him to serve as a king in and of himself, but rather to lead all of K'lal Yisrael and the world to accept *Ohl Malchus Shomayim*. This is, indeed, the manner in which Dovid HaMelech conducted himself while he was king. Here, we note that even though it may otherwise still take a while for the Malchus Beis Dovid to sprout in full form--we ask that the process be 'unnaturally' *sped up* in these last stages that we are currently in. Even though we are not in a position to *c'v* give Hashem advice as to when it would be best for the Moshiach to come, with the word *Meheirah* we indicate our own personal sense of urgency to reach the time

when we, together with the whole world, can properly fulfill *Ohl Malchus Shomayim* to its true and full degree!

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We continue with the phrase: “*VeKarno Tarum BeYeshuasecha*--and raise his position through Your [act of] salvation.” With the term *Yeshuah*, we recall one of the famous questions asked of a person after 120 years: “*Tzipisah L’Yeshuah*--did you eagerly await Yeshuas Hashem?” What can one do to demonstrate that he eagerly anticipates Yeshuas Hashem? This is what the *Sefer Yearning with Fire* (89, 5-minute daily lessons) is about. By studying this *Sefer*, one can come a long way towards successfully being able to answer the question. Especially in these turbulent and awe-filled times, it is an essential *Sefer* to study. One more important point on our phrase: HaRav Schwab, Z’tl, explains that the Moshiach himself will not be the savior--without *Yeshuasecha*--the *Yeshuas Hashem*--even the Moshiach will be completely helpless. Indeed, the Moshiach Himself will be among those who will be saved--as the Pasuk (Zechariah 9:9) teaches: “*Tzadik V’Nosha Hu*--he will be a Tzadik and one who is saved.” What then is the role of Moshiach? HaRav Schwab teaches that the whole lineage of Moshiach is one of ‘Ba’alei Teshuvah’. From Lot through Yehuda through Rus through Dovid HaMelech through Shlomo HaMelech. The function of Moshiach is to take his own personal family past and make the whole world into Ba’alei Teshuvah--starting first with the Jewish people and then moving to all of mankind, as we recite in Aleinu: “*Vechol Bnei Basar Yikru Vishemecha*--and all of humanity will [once and for all] call upon You”--may it come speedily and in our day!

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The next phrase is: “*Ki Lishuasecha Kivinu Kol HaYom*--because we hope for Your Yeshua all day long.” The *Avnei Eliyahu* explains that the word *Ki*--because, has special meaning here. Even though we have just asked Hashem to bring the Yeshuah, whether or not we may have zechuyos, **we relate here at least one zechus--which is the merit of our Bitachon--our hope that the Yeshuas Hashem will come.** This special appeal appears to be based in the three-word Pasuk (Bereishis 49:18 ) of “*Lishuasecha Kivisi Hashem-for Your salvation do I long Hashem.*” HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, points out that even when everything appears hopeless and lost--this Pasuk reinvigorates our Emunah--for it reminds us that the Yeshuas Hashem can come at any time--and in any manner. HaRav Friedlander adds that we express our awaiting Hashem’s Yeshua *Kol HaYom*--all day--meaning that when the Moshiach does not come in the morning, **we wait** until the afternoon, when he does not come in the afternoon **we wait** until the evening.... **Every day there is a fresh expectation, a new waiting.** Based upon our eager anticipation, based upon our sincere yearning, we enable Hashem to act on our behalf--*Middah K’Neged Middah*--and bring us the very Yeshua that **we have true bitachon**--that he can and will bring!

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HaRav Schwab, Z’tl, notes that the words *Mitzapim L’Yeshuah*, which are found towards the end of this Bracha in Nusach Sefard Siddurim (sometimes in parenthesis) were probably originally written as a marginal note--**as a reminder that this is the thought that one should have while**

**reciting this Bracha.** IN other words, we are not only *asking* that Hashem bring Moshiach--we are eagerly awaiting it! The Bracha concludes with the words: "*Baruch Atta Hashem Matzmiach Keren Yeshuah*--... Who makes the power of salvation sprout forth." HaRav Schwab compares the process of *Bias HaMoshiach* to a structure being built behind an enclosure. At first, nothing is visible besides the wall of the enclosure. Then, suddenly--the structure begins to appear above the enclosure! Chazal (Sanhedrin 97A) teach, HaRav Schwab concludes, that three things come unexpectedly--and one of them is the Moshiach--may we be surprised in this way--today!

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Non-coincidentally, we conclude this Bracha as we are about to take leave of Chodesh Menachem Av. Rabbi Heshy Kleinman, Shlita, reminded us of the following lesson-for-us-all (originally presented in Reb Shraga Feivel, by Yonasan Rosenblum (Artscroll p.110)):

*"One day Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz was teaching Tehillim, whose subject is the Jew's eternal pining for return to Jerusalem and the Temple that once stood there, "Nichsefa V'Gam Kalsa Nafshi--My soul yearns, indeed it pines for the courtyards of Hashem (Tehillim 84:3)." When he reached the next Pasuk, "Gam Tzippor Matza Vayis...--even the bird finds a home, and the free bird its nest," the tears ran down his cheeks, as he lamented, "Everything has its place--except for the Shechina (the Divine Presence), which remains in exile."*

We suggest that while we recite the many brachos in Shemone Esrei three times a day relating to Galus and Geulah, when we recite the words "*Ki LiShuasecha Kivinu Kol HaYom,*" we should at least be moved to think about how desperately we need this Yeshua! Are we no less Jews than HaRav Shraga Feivel? Let us move ourselves in the same way he did--by simply taking a moment of reflection to think about it! As the Mesilas Yescharim (end of Chapter 19) teaches, our thoughts, our feelings, our prayers and our yearnings, mean very much in Shomayim, and it is our great obligation and privilege to bring ourselves, K'lal Yisrael, and the World--to where we are supposed to be!

## **16. SHEMA KOLEINU**

We have now reached the Sixteenth Bracha of Shemone Esrei--the milestone bracha of *Shema Koleinu*--which encapsulates all of our previous requests. The Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* movingly writes on this Bracha as follows: "Here, one should turn to Hashem with all of his needs, whether big or small, and should leave out nothing, in his requests of Hashem. There should be nothing that a person intends to undertake or accomplish that day in which he does not ask for Hashem's success, and one should ask Hashem to place him on the proper and correct path. It goes without saying that if *c'v* a person has a *t'zara* in his house that he should daven here for its successful quashing and removal, and that if a person is blessed with a Simcha, he should daven that it should be a successful one--not causing any kind of iniquity nor resulting in any negative impact or effect. Before the concluding phrase of *Ki Atta Shome'ah*, **one should daven in his own words**--for it then per se will be Kava'anah-filled. These Tefillos will be new and fresh, as they will relate to the situations and events of the day, and should come from the depths of the heart. Through sincere Tefillos here, one can once and for all come to realize that his efforts and

actions are meaningless on their own--and are all subject to Hashem's determination and decree. Moreover, anything he asks for Hashem here will be for a Kosher purpose--how would he ask Hashem for wealth or anything else in a way which would anger Him?! Accordingly, one who davens for his needs from Hashem here will not readily sin--as he is asking Hashem Himself for the Bracha! Additional Note One: We can easily see how powerful this Bracha is in that five different names of Hashem are used within the Bracha: Hashem, Elokeinu, Kel, Atta, and Malkeinu. In Nusach Sefard there are actually seven Names of Hashem in the bracha, as we begin with the terms Av and HaRachaman. Additional Note Two: The Mishna Berura (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 122, seif katan 8) writes that it is better to daven the aforementioned Tefillos in *Elokai Netzor* after Yehiyu L'Razton, so that you will be able to answer Kaddish and Kedusha. Accordingly, one must gauge his Tefillos, and the Minyan he is davening with, accordingly. Additional Note Three: In all events, the *Kuntres Avodah HaTefillah* brings from the father of the Shelah HaKadosh that the Bracha of *Shema Koleinu* should be infused with more Kavannah than the preceding Brachos, as it is **the conclusion** of all of the Brachos of request--**and accordingly one's heart and mind should be especially focused on asking Hashem to listen to the kol of his Tefillah and accept his Tefillah B'Rachamim.**

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We begin (Nusach Ashkenaz) this bracha with the phrase *Shema Koleinu*--Hashem please hear, understand, and accept [similar to Shema Yisroel, in which we proclaim "Hear, understand, and accept, Yisroel: Hashem is our G-d, Hashem the One and Only."]. What do we want Hashem to hear, understand, and accept here? Our *Kol*, our *voices*, even if our Kavannah has not necessarily been full and complete. Just we recite in the Haggada on Pesach (based upon Shemos 2:24)"*Vayishmah Hashem Es Koleinu*, so too, do we ask Hashem to turn to our voice itself and to **hear, understand and accept our pleas for yeshuos**--just as He understood it then and determined to release us from Mitzrayim." As HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, writes: the Anshei Kneses HaGedolah especially chose not to use the term *Shema Tefilaseinu*, but rather *Shema Koleinu*--for even if we lack the merit, and even if we lack the good sense to daven in a better manner--please consider our *Kol* alone and respond to it without exacting a measure of strict justice. In a similar vein, the Sefer *Dover Shalom* writes that we ask Hashem to hear our *Kol*--our groans and cries, even if they are inarticulate and not detailed or exact. Finally, the *Eitz Yosef* writes that with the term *Koleinu*, we plead with Hashem that He recognize that we do not know all of the Kavanos, Remazim, and Sodos--all of the deeper meanings and powerful requests contained within the words of our Tefillos--but that Hashem nevertheless considers as if we had included them all within the *Kol* of our Tefillos. Then, with the next phrase after *Shema Koleinu*--*Hashem Elokeinu*--we use Hashem's names of Mercy and Hashgacha Pratis to emphasize the depths of our plea for compassion. In fact, there are two different kinds of compassion for which we plea--as we ask for *Chus* and for *Racheim*. What is the difference between them? The Artscroll Siddur, as well as *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, and HaRav Friedlander, all bring the explanation of the G'ra. As beautifully put in the Artscroll Siddur: "The term *Chus*, pity, refers to an artisan's special regard for the product of his hands; while *Rachamim*, compassion, describes the emotion aroused by someone who is pathetically helpless." We therefore exclaim--"Hashem Elokeinu, pity us because we are Your handiwork, and be compassionate, because we need You so desperately!"

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After asking Hashem to be “*Chus V'Racheim Aleinu*”--we further our request with the phrase “*V'Kabel B'Rachamim U'VeRatzon Es Tefilaseinu.*” In Nusach Ashkenaz this is the second of **three times that we will mention the term *Rachamim* in this one Bracha**. Once again, in asking for *Rachamim* we indicate to Hashem that we know that we are unworthy of His granting our requests and receiving His blessings. When sincere, this expression constitutes the optimum kind of Tefillah--***Ke'Ani BaPesach***--as an indigent person who knocks on Hashem's door. To better help visualize the moment, one can actually put his hand out in front of him as he recites these words. We note that we not only ask Hashem for His *Rachamim*, however, but also for His *Ratzon*. By *Ratzon*, we mean to indicate (at least) two points: Firstly, we don't want to act like mechutzafim, and that we are sincerely looking for Hashem to accept our prayers ‘*B'Nachas Ruach*’ (*Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah*). Moreover, when something is done *B'Ratzon*, with willingness, it is performed in a more complete and perhaps more-than-complete way. We thus respectfully ask Hashem to not only accept our Tefillos on a minimal basis, but accept them with a ‘**breite hant**’--in the most beneficial way possible--with a *Ratzon* that Only Hashem is capable of!

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The Bracha continues: *Ki Keil Shomea Tefillos VeSachanunim Atta* . The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* explains that *Tefillos* refers to our set and designated Tefillos such as Shemone Esrei, whereas *Tachanunim* are our private prayers and pleadings for our personal needs. We then continue with the phrase *U'Milefanecha Malkeinu Reikam Al Teshiveinu*. The *Sefer Baruch She'Amar* explains that we address Hashem here especially as Malkeinu--for it is truly to the glory of a king--who is so powerful--that he can grant requests that no one else can. Thus, even if we are wholly unworthy--please do not send us away empty-handed--please provide us with some of the relief and help we need--because You are a King who knows, cares and loves His subjects!

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Firstly, we note that the term *Shome'ah* or *Shema* is mentioned four times (in Nusach Sefard five times!) within the bracha. This may serve to remind us that we should be careful in listening to others--so that we can legitimately ask Hashem to listen to us. In fact, the *Sefer Avudraham* writes that the basis for our asking Hashem within the bracha for “*Reikam Al Teshiveinu*” (do not send us away empty-handed) is the Posuk “*Al Yashov Dach Nichlam*” (Tehillim 74:21). This is the very same Pasuk which teaches us l'halacha that we should not turn away a pauper begging for assistance. (There are exceptions to the rule, which we will not delve into now.) Thus, we must both listen to others if we want Hashem to listen to us--and similarly if we want Hashem not to turn us away empty-handed, we should endeavor to act in a like manner with others who need our help. In many Siddurim one will find a Nusach of Vidui placed as a note underneath the bracha of *Shema Koleinu*. This is based on the Zohar in Parshas Balak, which teaches how important it is for one to recite Vidui in *Shema Koleinu*. The Mishna Berurah actually brings this concept in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 119, Seif Katan 4. The Mishna Berurah adds there that one should also ask for Parnassah in this Bracha [before *Ki Atta Shome'ah*], *even if* he is a wealthy person. We conclude the bracha with the words “*Baruch Atta Hashem Shome'ah Tefillah*”. The bracha is in the present tense, like all of the other brachos of Shemone Esrei, because we must realize that Hashem not only listened to our forefathers and fathers--but wants

to listen to us in the here and now as well--and we must accordingly daven to Him in a manner which befits this wonderful and wondrous reality!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

The Levush writes that this Bracha corresponds to the Malochim who thanked Hashem for answering our Tefillos in Mitzrayim when we cried out to Him, as the Pasuk (Devarim 26:7) records: “*VaYishma Hashem Es Koleinu--and Hashem heard our voices*”. Indeed, HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, notes that the initial phrase of the Bracha is *Shema Koleinu*--based on this very Pasuk! The *Dover Shalom* writes that ‘*Koleinu*’ actually refers to our moans and our groans--even though another human being standing by may not understand the meaning behind the moan and groan--we know Hashem does! The *Eitz Yosef*, in a different vein, explains that ‘*Koleinu*’ here refers to the voice of our own tefillos--even if we do not understand the depths of their meaning, all of the intentions and *sodos* placed into them by the Anshei Kneses HaGedolah, and all others who were Mechaber Tefillos for K’lal Yisrael. We ask that Hashem not only listen to our voice--but do so as *Hashem Elokeinu*--so that the Chesed of Hashem represented by the Names *Hashem* and *Elokeinu* overtake any strict Din which we might otherwise be subject to. We plead with Hashem here that our Tefillos--which we really do mean sincerely no matter how improperly they may be expressed--are accepted by Hashem to the greatest extent possible! We must certainly make sure to recite these treasured and powerful words **Shema Koleinu Hashem Elokeinu** with Kavannah!

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We continue with the next phrase of “*Chus V’Rachem Aleinu*--have compassion and pity on us.” The *Avnei Eliyahu* explains the difference between **Chus** and **Rachem**. The term **Chus** relates to the affection and caring that a creator has for its creations (such as the craftsman or artisan for his work product). For instance, Hashem tells Yonah (3:10-11): “*Atta Chasta Al HaKikayon Asher Lo Amalta Bo VeLo Gidalto...VeAni Lo Achus Al Ninveh...--you had such compassion for the Kikayon tree which you did not toil over nor nurture--and I should not have compassion over the people of Ninveh?!*” On the other hand, *Rachamim*, or mercy, is not based in the relationship of the maker with the item--but is instead rooted in the desperation or lowliness of the person or item for whom or which mercy is sought. *Rachamim* is an expression of abject humility--where we ask Hashem that even if we have sunk so low that You have even theoretically a justifiably diminished regard for us as Your creations--please have pity and mercy on us in all events! We then proceed to reiterate “*VeKabel B’Rachamim U’Veratzon Es Tefillaseinu.*” We ask that even if we are *miskeinim*--direly inadequate--please accept and be appeased by our Tefillos--for at least we know to come to You in sincerity!”

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The next phrase is: “*Ki Kel Shomei’ah Tefillos Vesachanunim Atta*--because You are G-d, Who listens to our prayers and supplications.” HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, importantly explains that the word *Kel* uniquely combines Hashem’s Omnipotence with His Chesed so that it essentially means ‘All Powerful in Chesed’. **Kel** is accordingly and most appropriately one of the 13 Middos of Hashem--‘*Hashem, Hashem Kel Rachum*’. It is because of this All-Powerful Chesed that we ask Hashem to listen to our prayers. HaRav Friedlander then continues that the



difference between *Tefillos* and *Tachanunim* is that the term *Tefillos* typifies our regular prayers--when we daven regularly we can explain what we are davening for and why we are davening for it. On the other hand, the term *Tachanunim*, represents a plea for Chesed without any *cheshbonos*, without any justifications or explanations. In truth, all of our requests must be presented in the manner of *Tachanunim*--pleadingly and with sincerity, in the manner in which one would ask for mercy for himself in front of one who can fulfill his request. The concept of *Tachanunim* also includes the tone and manner in which the Tefillah is recited--and most certainly indicates that one is davening not because he *has to*--but because he *wants to and needs to*. When we pray with *Tachanunim*, we recognize that Hashem has to do nothing for us, we rely upon Hashem's *Chein* (His graciousness towards us), and that all He does for us is *Bechinam*--as a great and free gift. One can picture an indigent person at the door or in Shul whose hand is out. This is how we come before our Creator--Who is a *Kel Shomei'ah*--One Who is All-Powerful in Chesed-- actually listening to our prayers!

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The next phrase is: "*U'Milfanecha Malkeinu Reikam Al Tishiveinu*--and do not turn us away empty-handed from before You, our King." HaRav Schwab, Z'tl, in the monumental, **must-have-in-your-home Sefer, Rav Schwab on Prayer** (Artscroll) teaches as follows: "We hope that HaKadosh Baruch Hu answers our tefillah in the affirmative, and He gives us health, sustenance, and whatever else we ask Him for. However, sometimes, for reasons of His own, HaKadosh Baruch Hu says "no" to our tefillah. We therefore ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu here that if the answer to our tefillah is "no," then, at least "do not send us away empty-handed," with a feeling of total rejection. At least let our hearts be filled with emunah and bitachon, that we have had the zechus to talk to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and that He has heard our tefillah, whether or not He answers us in the affirmative. An illustration of this is found in the description of Chana after she had cried her heart out to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, begging Him for a son. When she finished, her demeanor is described as, "*Ufaneha Lo Hayu Lah Od*--her face was no longer sad" (Shmuel I 1:18 ). Although she was not sure that her tefillah would be answered, she nevertheless left with a feeling that HaKadosh Baruch Hu had heard her tefillah, and she relied on His judgment."

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The next phrase is: "**Ki Atta Shomei'ah Tefillas Amecha Yisrael B'Rachamim**--for You listen to the Tefillos of Your nation Yisrael with mercy." HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, points out that even though we have just mentioned the words "**Ki Kel Shomei'ah Tefillos V'Sachanunim Atta**--for You listen to prayers and supplications", here we provide a **second Ki**--a second and further explanation of why we are now pleading before Hashem: Hashem--not only do You listen to mankind's Tefillos, but You listen to the Tefillos of *Amecha Yisrael*. Now, what is special about *Amecha Yisrael*? First, unlike the other nations of the world who only thank Hashem when the goings are good, we are Hashem's nation in all events and under all circumstances, no matter what the nations of the world intend to do to us, and no matter how beleaguered we may be. Additionally, as *Amecha Yisrael*--we offer our prayers collectively and together, which brings greater potency to our Tefillos, for, as the saying goes, for the whole is greater than the sum of all of its parts. Thirdly, through our closeness and prayers for one another, we arouse Hashem's compassion towards us in a Middah K'Neged Middah manner. Finally, the *Sifsei Chaim* teaches that the more one associates himself with the K'lal, the more he draws Hashem's **mercy** on the K'lal as a whole towards his particular Tefillos as well. The

concluding words of our bracha are: “*Baruch Atta Hashem Shomei’ah Tefillah*--Who is listening to our prayers (in the present tense)--we can and should envision **Hashem listening to our very words**--and we should therefore very much make sure that they are sincere and heartfelt!

## **17. RETZAI (Avodah)**

The *Seder Hayom* writes that this bracha is the first bracha after our requests have been concluded, and in it we ask that Hashem find favor in our service of Him. In fact, in the time of the Bais Hamikdash--may it speedily be rebuilt--the specific request was that **the Avodah in the Bais Hamikdash** should find favor in Hashem in Hashem's eyes--and that Avodah included the *Ishei Yisroel*--the fire offerings, the karbanos of K'lal Yisroel. At this time, we daven that our Tefillos be accepted **in place of** the Avodas Bais Hamikdash, which is the *Avodah Sheleima* -- and that we once again **see with our own eyes** (*VeSechezna Aineinu*) the original Avodah. This essential bracha thus contains a great dual purpose and character--asking that our Avodah now give *nachas ruach* to Hashem--and demonstrating our yearning for the Avodah Sheleima of the Bais Hamikdash. Oh--how we should utter the words *Vesechezna Aineinu* with longing--our **very own eyes should be zoche to see the fulfillment** of the greatest dream of all mankind and of all time!

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Many ask why this bracha is grouped together with the last two brachos under the title of *Hoda’ah*, as opposed to being grouped together with the other brachos of Bakasha. After all, even the first word--*Retzeih*--**is a plea** to Hashem to be pleased and look favorably towards us, with the bracha continuing with **the plea** for Hashem to restore the Avodah to the Bais Hamikdash. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, answers that all of the prior brachos of Bakasha can refer to an individual’s needs as well. From *Retzeih* and on we are not asking for individual needs--but only for communal needs--**and we thank Hashem because it is only He who can respond to the needs of the millions and of the entire world**. HaRav Kanievsky also explains (based upon the Yerushalmi) that when we ask that the Avodah be returned *LiDvir Beisecha*, the word *Dvir* refers to the Kodosh HeKedoshim because it is from there that Hashem is ‘*Medaber*’--communicates to His people in this world. Finally, HaRav Kanievsky was asked why we ask Hashem in this Tefillah to again accept our Tefillos (*U’Sefillasam BeAhava Sekebel B’Ratzon*)--after all, didn’t we just ask Hashem to accept our Tefillos in *Shema Koleinu*?! He answers that here we are asking for an elevated level of acceptance--an acceptance not only *B’Rachamim* or even *B’Ratzon*--but ***B’Ahava***--showing His love for us! Remember to have Kavannah when reciting the word ***B’Ahava--as we ask for Hashem’s loving acceptance!***

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The Sefer *BeRumo Shel Olam* brings in the name of the Shelah HaKadosh that in this bracha one should plead with Hashem, *Beshivron Lev*, that his Tefillos be accepted in the place of a Karbon, until the day that our Karbanos come back--which we also pray for with the words *VeHashev Es HaAvoda LiDvir Baisecha*.” The Ya’avetz incredibly writes that if one does not answer Amein to this bracha in Chazaras Hashatz he could be “*MeAkev Bias HaMoshiach chas veshalom*”. This is an especially important remark to those who hastily answer Modim without first answering Amein to our bracha of *Retzei*. Instead, one should clearly enunciate Amein, stop for a moment, and then begin his recitation of Modim D’Rabanan. We now come to perhaps the most well-

known phrase in the bracha--*VeIshei Yisroel U'Tefillasam BeAhava Sekabel B'Ratzon*--may the Karbanos which we will bring, and our Tefillos **at all times**, be accepted because of the love You have for us. The Midrash teaches that the term *Ishei Yisroel* applies even in today's day, as the Malach Michoel offers the Neshamos of Tzaddikim on the Heavenly Mizbe'ach. (Although, beyond our understanding, what we can understand at a minimum is that much is happening on our behalf in the Heavens above). The Shulchan Aruch HaRav adds that the Tzaddikim in this world, by their pure and holy actions, are our *Ishei Yisroel* in the here and now--as their Tefillos, their words and actions have a purifying effect on us all.

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a. Our note yesterday was on *Velshei Yisroel U'Sefillasam*, and our next point of discussion for today would have been the punctuation of this phrase. A reader 'did our work for us' by beautifully explaining as follows: "The G'ra avoids the problem saying that *Bizman She'ein Bais Hamikdash Kayam*, the punctuation should be moved, so that the period is after *Ve'Ishei Yisroel* and before *U'Sefillasam* . So that the bracha reads:

... Vehasheiv  
Es Ha'avodah Lid'vir Baisecha  
Ve'Ishei Yisroel  
U'Sefillasam Sekabel BeRatzon...

... And restore:  
(a) the service to the Devir of Your home  
(b) and the fires of Israel.  
And may You accept their prayers willingly...

If we say the phrase is "*VeIshei Yisroel U'Sefillasam BeAhava Sekabel*" together , or even that this was the phrase originally when the Kohanim said the bracha in the Bais Hamikdash (Tamid 5:1), the question remains: What did Anshei Keneses HaGedolah mean by *Vehasheiv Es Ha'avodah Lidevir Baisecha* -- this was being said **during** the Avodah?!?!

Perhaps we can say that "Devir Baisecha" refers to the Kodosh HaKedoshim only when it contains the Aron. Thus, the Kohanim are asking not for the Avodah in general, but the Avodas Kohein Gadol as it was done on Yom Kippur in *Bayis Rishon*. They were asking HaKadosh Baruch Hu to return the Aron to Bayis Sheini, so that it too may have a Devir, and thus we can return to having an Avodah in it!"

b. In the bracha of *Retzei*, the Shoresh of 'Ratzoh' represented in *Retzai* and *Ratzon* is mentioned **three times** in this one bracha. With this we clearly indicate that we desperately need Hashem's Ritzui--His appeasement, His desire and His willingness to bring us back to the Avodah in the Bais HaMikdash. If we are pleading Hashem for *His Ratzon* (whether or not we may deserve it)--all the more so must we demonstrate *our Ratzon* when reciting the bracha!

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The Sefer *Avudraham* writes that the last three brachos of Shemone Esrei are distinguished in that they are focused on **Kavod Shomayim**. Our bracha of *Avodah*, for instance, pleads for the

final return of our Avodas Hashem to its optimum state in the Bais HaMikdash. We conclude the bracha with the words *V'Sechezenah Aineinu BeShuvcha L'Tzion BeRachamim*--may our eyes see Hashem's return to Zion with mercy. The Chofetz Chaim notes that our abilities to see, hear and speak are not based in our Guf, in our body--**but are really empowered by our Nefesh**. What we see, hear, and speak in this world will then be translated into what these abilities accomplished for, or against, the Nefesh in this world. We therefore plead here for our very eyes see the Shechina return to Yerushalayim--thereby fulfilling their true purpose and goal. The Sefer *Baruch SheAmar* further explains that the reason that we specifically ask for our eyes to see the return (as opposed to the experience by our other senses) is based on [the deeper meaning of] the Pasuk (Yeshaya 52:8-see there) *Ki Ayin BeAyin Yiru BeShuv Hashem Tzion*. We then add that the return should be *BeRachamim*, also based on the Pasuk (Tehillim 102:17)--*Atta Takum TeRachem Tzion*. The reason that we conclude our request with the word *BeRachamim* is because the Chevlei Moshiach could c'v bring extreme distress. As the Gemara (Sanhedrin 98B) records "May it come, but I not see it"--therefore we ask that the Moshiach come (and all of the brachos listed at the top of this Bulletin on his arrival be recited) not out of or in a state of Yesurim and pain--but *B'Nachas U'Vehashket*--so that we will want to and can see it with our very own eyes! May our tefillos in this bracha be sincere and fulfilled!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

The *Levush* teaches that the Bracha of *Retzei* corresponds to the bracha that the Malochim recited when the Shechina descended upon the Mishkan. Chazal teach that the reason this Bracha is placed here, after *Shomei'ah Tefillah* (and not before, as one of the Brachos relating to the Geulah), is because the ultimate *Makom* of Tefillah is the Beis HaMikdash which is known as *Beis Tefillasi*. Regarding this Bracha, the Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* writes: "*VeYispallel Me'od LaHashem Sheyachzir HaAvodah Limkomo*--one should daven with great sincerity that Hashem return our Service to its proper place." The *Ya'avetz* in the name of the Shelah HaKadosh also emphasizes that the bracha also applies to our times--for we are to pray here with a broken heart that Hashem should accept our Tefillos in the place of a Karbon. The *Ya'avetz* further notes that **this Bracha is so important that if one does not answer Amen to it in Chazaras HaShatz, he is, c'v, me'akeiv (withholds) the Bi'as HaMoshiach!** Let us begin our study of the Bracha itself. The Bracha commences with the words: "*Retzei Hashem Elokeinu BeAmecha Yisrael U'V'Sefilasam*--Hashem be appeased by Your people Yisrael and their prayers." As we have noted previously, the combination of the two Names *Hashem Elokeinu* is a specific appeal to Hashem's endless mercy, as evidenced by these two Names of mercy. Following *Hashem Elokeinu*, we refer to ourselves as *Amecha Yisrael*. You may recall that non-coincidentally (as it never is), the Bracha of *Shema Koleinu* just concluded with the very same phrase *Amecha Yisrael* as well. Last week, we provided four explanations of the term *Amecha Yisrael* there, which are equally applicable here. Finally, the term *Retzei* itself is closely related to the term *Rotzeh*--which we used to conclude the Bracha of *HaRotzeh BeSeshuvah*--we ask Hashem to take-in and accept our Tefillos, as if we had expressed them with all of the proper Kavannos, and with all of the proper meanings. At least when we express the request--let us have the proper Kavannah--so that our sincerity is clear, pure and meaningful!

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HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, points out that in the Bracha of *Retzei* we reference the terms *Retzei*, *BeRatzon* and *LeRatzon*. The emphasis on *Ratzon* is based upon our pleading to turn the moment into an **Eis Ratzon**--a time when our Tefillos are more acceptable to and accepted by Hashem. With the emphasis on *Retzei* and *Ratzon*, we additionally emphasize our absolute belief that everything in our life is based upon Hashem's Will, and His Hashgacha Pratis over us. Indeed, living itself is marked by **Chaim BeRetzono** (Tehillim 30:4). There is one other point. Just as a good son wants to please his father, in this Tefillah we express our desire that our Tefillos and our actions appease and please Hashem, as our Father in Heaven, as well. We continue now with the next phrase in the Bracha of: "*Vehasheiv Es HaAvodah LiDvir Beisecha*--and restore the Avodah to the Kodesh HaKodashim." The *Sifsei Chaim* explains that after having just asked Hashem to be pleased with us and our prayers, we immediately recognize that we are in a *tekufah*, a period, of galus--a time of sorely felt *Hester Panim*. The light of Hashem's Shechina will shine upon us only when the Beis HaMikdash is rebuilt, and the great Kedusha that reigns there, and in the services performed there, will draw us so much closer to Him. The reason the Kodesh HaKodashim is referred to as the *Dvir* of the *Bayis* is because it is from the Kodesh HaKodashim only that the *Dibur* of Hashem comes forth towards His people, as the Pasuk (Shemos 25:22) teaches: "*ViDibarti Itecha Mai'al HaKapores Mibein Shenei HaKeruvim*." The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 94:1, Mishna Berurah seif katan 7) rules that when davening Shemone Esrei we should view ourselves as standing before this very Kapores. This is the one time that we refer to the Holy of Holies in the Shemone Esrei and our longing for it--let us make it count!

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The Bracha continues: "*V'ishei Yisrael U'Sefillasam B'Ahava Sekabel BeRatzon*--the fire offerings of Yisrael and their Tefillos accept with love and favor." There are different approaches to the term *V'ishei Yisrael*, and whether it is connected to the earlier part of the Bracha, or whether it is connected to *U'Sefillasam* (as we have presented it here). The Avudraham in fact brings both opinions. Importantly, the G'ra accepts the first opinion--putting a period after *V'ishei Yisrael*--connecting the fire offerings to the service in the Beis HaMikdash (*Dvir Beisecha*). The other possibility is that the term *Ishei Yisrael* refers to the Neshamos of the Tzaddikim in Shomayim (see Tosfos to Menachos 110A) or perhaps even to the people of Israel (the term *Ish* is similar to man), in which case it can be combined with the next phrase of *U'Sefillasam B'Ahava Sekabel B'Ratzon*. At this point, we not only ask that our Avodah is accepted **B'Ratzon**, but also **B'Ahava**--love. When one demonstrates love, he does something above and beyond what is otherwise expected, and what is otherwise deserved. We are asking Hashem to demonstrate this love to us--by accepting us and our prayers. The previous time we had used the term *B'Ahava* in Shemone Esrei was back in the first Bracha where we stated: "*U'Meivi Go'el Livnei Veneihem LeMa'an Shemo B'Ahava*." It is clear that the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah*, with their Ruach HaKodesh, very judiciously utilize the term *B'Ahava*--and so we should very much appreciate and emphasize its meaning--as we recite it here!

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We continue with the phrase: "*U'sehi LeRatzon Tomid Avodas Yisrael Amecha*--and may the service of Your people always be favorable to You." HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, points out that by the word **Tomid**--always, we ask that Hashem revitalize and renew our finding of favor in

His eyes. It is interesting to note that in the last Bracha of Shema Koleinu and earlier in this Bracha we referred to ourselves as *Amecha Yisrael*, and we now refer to ourselves as *Yisrael Amecha*--putting *Yisrael* first before *Amecha*. We may suggest that with this we emphasize that even if we ourselves are not worthy, we ask Hashem to recall the zechus of *Yisrael*, who is otherwise known as the *Bechir She'beAvos*--the chosen one of the Avos, from whom the twelve Shevatim came forth. [We found that the *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* gives a different explanation to the juxtaposition of *Yisrael* and *Amecha*, see there.] The Bracha now continues: “*VeSechezenah Eineinu BeShuvecha L'Tzion B'Rachamim*--may our eyes see Your merciful return to Tzion.” **Here, we make one of our most powerful requests in all of Shemone Esrei:** We ask not only that our own eyes witness the return of Hashem to Tzion, but that the return occur *B'Rachamim*--without the devastation and destruction that could otherwise accompany the Chevlei Moshiach or the war of Gog U'Magog--**but through Mercy, in peace.** If it is difficult for us to shed a meaningful tear at this point, at the very least the two great requests contained in this phrase should be made with true supplication and real meaning and feeling. One should feel it in the here and now!

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We conclude the bracha with the words: “*Baruch Atta Hashem HaMachazir Shechinaso L'Tzion*--Who restores His Shechina to Tzion.” The Pasuk in Eicha (1:6) writes: “*VaYeitzei Min Bas Tzion Kol Hadara*--all of the beauty of Tzion left her.” HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that this Pasuk is the reason we refer to Tzion here, **as we appeal to Hashem that Tzion's beauty return with the complete and outward presence of the Shechina.** HaRav Schwab, Z'tl, in the monumental, **must-have-in-your-home Sefer, Rav Schwab on Prayer** (Artscroll) teaches as follows: “This Bracha is said in the present tense, although it has not happened yet, because we have such Emunah that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will return His presence to Tzion that we can visualize it before our eyes, as if it has already taken place. **How can we explain the difference between Tzion and Yerushalayim?** HaRav Schwab explains: “Usually, the word Tzion refers to the Beis HaMikdash, as in *Tzion Mishkan Kevodecha*, and the term Yerushalayim means the city, *V'Lirushalayim Ircha* [Tanach is replete with examples of these uses.] Tzion conveys the idea of the ‘outstanding’ aspect of the Jewish nation. It describes the Beis HaMikdash, with its focal point being the Kodesh HaKadashim, which contains evidence of the Torah Shebichsav and Torah Shebe'al Peh. It radiates the truth of Torah to the world through the Sanhedrin that sits within its portals, **Ki MiTzion Teitzeih Torah** (Yeshayahu 2:3). Therefore we could say that Tzion, the Beis HaMikdash, represents the *neschama* of the Jewish nation. Yerushalayim, the city, could be said to represent the *guf* of the Jewish nation. It is the embodiment of the Torah MiTzion in the physical life of Am Yisrael. Accordingly, Yerushalayim, as the incorporation of the Torah MiTzion--with all the mundane activities of the physical life of the Jewish nation-- has great kedusha as well. The Navi describes it as: “*VeHaya Kol Sir BeYerushalayim U'VeYehuda Kodesh LaHashem Tzevakos*--and it will be that every pot in Yerushalayim and in Yehuda will be holy unto Hashem...” (Zechariah 14:21). Even the cooking pots will be Kodesh LaHashem! For a broader explanation of the concept of Tzion see *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, where HaRav Schwab comments on the words “*Yimloch Hashem L'Olam Elokai'ich Tzion*.” How important--how enlightening!

## **18. MODIM (Hoda'ah)**

Several preliminary points:

A. From a reader on proper pronunciation of two words in the bracha:

Ki lo **chaLU** Rachamecha

Ki lo **SAmu**

To mispronounce as CHAlu makes it into a ches and means exactly the opposite, that His rachamim is not chal, c"v.

Ki lo chaLU with a chaf means that His Rachamim has not finished!

B. The Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 101, seif katan 3) brings that according to some Poskim the Kavannah in Peirush HaMilos of this Bracha is so essential, that if one has not done so --it is *me'akev*--just as in the Bracha of Avos! Review the bracha--is there any word that you do not understand--and if not--is there any reason why you cannot dedicate yourself to thanking Hashem with every single word of the bracha?

C. In fact, HaRav Yonasan Eibenschutz, Zt'l, in the Sefer Ya'aros Devash teaches: " In this bracha one should give **personal shevach** to Hashem for the wonders that Hashem provides **on his behalf** daily. One must realize that the Ba'al HaNess does not always appreciate the Nissim that occur to him, and that each and every one of us is the recipient of many **nissim nistarim** daily. Additionally, based upon the Zohar, HaRav Eibenschutz writes that one must be especially dedicated to giving hoda'ah daily on the return of his soul to his body the previous night. This may be the basis for the special thanks in the bracha for "*VeAhl Nishmoseinu HaPekudos Loch*". The gift of our Neshamos returning daily--something never, ever to forget as evidenced by the bracha of Elokai Neshama--and the Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah help us tremendously by giving us the reminder--and even the Nusach--to **especially thank Hashem** for this in the bracha of *Hoda'ah* three times a day!

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A. From a reader, as taught by Rabbi Pinches Friedman, Shlita: "It may be difficult to have Kavannah for all 100 brachos a day. Perhaps we can take solace from the words of the *Da'as Zekainim MiBa'alei HaTosfos* (Parshas Eikev), who teach that the Chachomim established saying Modim three times a day, to correspond with the 100 Brachos, **and by saying Modim, which has the numerical value of 100, with proper concentration**, it is considered as if we said all 100 Brachos with proper concentration." Hakhel Note: Let us be guided by the words of the *Da'as Zekainim*!

B. As noted last week, the Bracha of *Retzei* is the Bracha of Avodah--our great desire to return to the complete service of the Bais HaMikdash. After we conclude this Bracha, we immediately bow down to the words of *Modim Anachnu Lach*. HaRav Yosef B. Soloveitchik, Z'tl, (Boston;

RIETS) explains that our bowing down as we begin Modim **is an immediate reaction** to our heightened awareness of the Avodah of the Bais HaMikdash that we seek--as we now sense ourselves awed and as if in the Bais HaMikdash--concomitantly humbled and spiritually elevated by the moment! Hakhel Note: Feel the sublimity each and every time--and it will be much easier when the actual moment arrives!

C. It is extremely important to note that the first thing that we thank Hashem for in Modim--**even before** thanking Him for our life every moment (i.e., “*Al Chayeinu HaMesurim BeYadcha*”) is ***Sho’atah Hu Hashem*** (Yud-Key-Vuv-Key--the Name of Mercy), ***Elokeinu*** (*our G-d--Who watches over us with Hashgacha Pratis*), ***V’Elokei Avoseinu*** (our relationship goes back thousands of years--through Avrohom Avinu!), ***LeOlam VaEd*** (not only has this been the case for thousands of years, and is the case now--but it will be so forever and ever). No one else can come anywhere near making these claims--this is a tremendous amount to be thankful for--and we should not let these precious diamond-studded words pass us by without appreciating their monumental meaning!

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A. The Sefer *Seder HaYom* beautifully points out that not only does Hashem save us from *Tzara V’Tzukah*, and not only does He provide *Nissim V’Nefla’os* on our behalf (the multitude of which we do not even know about)--**but all of this is done within the context of the Galus that we are in**--surrounded by enemies of all shapes and sizes--who or which may even be in the diverse forms of friendly world leaders on the one hand, and technological advancements aimed at our youth on the other. Yet, we miraculously continue to thrive as Torah Jews, because Hashem saves us from their schemes, plans and designs. The *Seder HaYom* writes that this in fact is why the Bracha of *Hoda’ah* is placed immediately after the Bracha of *Avodah*--for although we were deserving of the Mikdash to be destroyed and for us to be driven into this exile--Hashem has not forsaken us or been repulsed by us--but rather His Chesed continues to be with us, and He longs for the day when He can fulfill His Bris with us--and have full Nachas from His children.

B. It is certainly no coincidence (as it never is) that the only two critical Brachos in which we bow to Hashem are *Avos* and *Hoda’ah*, at the beginning and end of the Bracha. One should consult with his Rav as to how the manner of one’s bowing when reciting *Modim Anachnu Lach* at the beginning of the Bracha differs from the bowing at Baruch Attah Hashem at the end of the Bracha. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* writes that our bowing is meant to indicate our humility at the realization that we are unworthy of all the gifts that Hashem gives us, and that in truth we can never ever thank Him enough. As one bows, one should accept upon himself Hashem’s Mastery and Kingship, as a subject bows before his king. See the Sefer *Yesod V’Shoresh HaAvodah* for further detail.

C. The Bracha continues with the words *Nodeh Lecha U’Nesaper Tehillasecha*--we thank You and we relate Your praises. We should recognize that there are instances in which we may not go into detail when thanking Hashem--but there are other instances in which our thanks and appreciation should be expressed in detail (*Nesaper*--like a story). With the words of *Nodeh* and



*Nesaper*, we recognize that we must think about and express our Hoda'ah to Hashem both quantitatively and qualitatively!

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A. We especially thank Hashem for “*Ahl Chayeinu HaMesurim BeYadecha.*” We should think as we recite these words that we are not only thanking Hashem for granting us life minute after minute, but also for *every aspect* of our bodies and souls within us. We can quickly think up from the bottom of our feet to the top of our head--and recognize *how much is working*--that we must *admit* would not be functioning--but for Hashem's empowerment and graciousness--oh we have so much to be thankful for.

B. We note that the entire Bracha is in the plural form (as is the rest of Shemone Esrei). We do not only thank Hashem for ourselves personally, but **also for** our immediate family, broader family, friends, community, and all of Klal Yisroel.

C. “*Ve'Ahl Nifleosecha*” refers to the Niflaos HaBorei which we experience as *'teva'*--the sun shines, the car starts, gravity is keeping things (including me) on the ground, I can speak to (and even simultaneously see) someone 6,000 miles away by pressing a few buttons on a small object. You can think and thank for different *niflaos* all the time!

D. There are two opinions as to what the term “*Erev VaVoker VeTzaharaim*” applies to--some say that it refers to the different kind of miracles, wonders, and goodnesses that happen at different times of the day--evening, morning and afternoon.. Others learn that the phrase refers to the times that we praise Hashem--i.e., our three Tefillos. If you are unsure--you can certainly have both of the marvelous Kavannos!

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A. As a reader pointed out, one of the descriptions of Hashem in the Bracha is **HaTov**. With this, we express that everything Hashem does is absolute good. Hakhel Note: We actually use the term HaTov again at the end of the Bracha itself--*HaTov Shimcha*.

B. We continue in the Bracha, by reciting that because we recognize all the goodness and wonders that Hashem performs on our behalf, we will bless and uplift His name *Tomid* and *LeOlam VaEd*. *Tomid* indicates constancy, throughout the day. With *LeOlam VaEd*, we exclaim that not only do we thank you daily now--but that these daily thanks will continue forever and ever!

C. We then exclaim that we will praise Hashem's name B'Emes. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that B'Emes mean B'Kavannah. If we are going to express our thanks, it must be with meaning, thought, and feeling--otherwise it is simply not thanks.

D. Towards the end of the Bracha, we recite-- *Yeshuaseinu Ve'Ezraseinu Selah*. We note that the terms Yeshua and Ezra mirror the terms in the first Bracha of Shemone Esrei--*Ozer*

*U'Moshia*. The difference between *Yeshua* and *Ezra* is that by *Yeshua* we mean that Hashem saves us from c'v a Tzara. By *Ezra* we mean that Hashem helps us in anything and everything that we do. The word *Selah* teaches that Hashem is our Savior and Helper every moment and forever.

E. Finally, we conclude the Bracha with the phrase *U'Lecha Na'eh LeHodos*. We are not expressing our thanks simply because we have to, or because it is right--as one would have to say thank you to his host or benefactor--but because it really feels nice and beautiful to do so. It gives us Hana'ah--we feel good about--expressing our thanks and recognition of the gifts, kindnesses, and eternity that Hashem bestows upon us!

----- **SECOND SET** -----

Hoda'ah is such an important bracha that the Mishna Berurah writes that if one did not have proper Kavannah in the bracha of Avos, then there are Poskim who rule that having Kavannah in this bracha of *Hoda'ah* satisfies the minimum Kavannah requirement. The Steipeler Gaon, Z'tl (Brachos 27) brings from the Sefer *Rokeach* that Kavannah is *me'akeiv* either in the Bracha of Avos or in the Bracha of Hoda'ah, and so if one did not have Kavannah in the Bracha of Avos, he should be sure to have Kavannah in the Bracha of Hoda'ah in order to fulfill the Mitzvah of Tefillah. The *Sifsei Chaim* explains why the Bracha of Modim is so crucial that it could be equated with the Bracha Avos in this sense--**for the *ikar* of Tefillah is a feeling of our sheer dependency on and subservience to HaKadosh Baruch Hu--to know and feel that everything comes from Hashem--and this is exactly what we express in the Bracha of *Hoda'ah***'. The word "*Modim*", explains the *Sifsei Chaim*, bears two meanings: (a) to be *Modeh Al HaEmes*--to admit to the truth, and (b) to express *Todah* or thanks and *HaKaras HaTov* to Hashem. Of course, the two thoughts are related--once we recognize that Hashem directs everything, we express our thanks for all that He does for us. The first thing we recognize/thank Hashem for is that he is "*Hashem Elokeinu*". As we have noted in the past, the term *Hashem Elokeinu* refers to Hashem's Rachamim towards us, and His Hashgacha Pratis over us in all matters. We may accordingly suggest that the first words of the Bracha express the theme beautifully: "*Modim Anachnu Lach*"--we thank Hashem that we are His!

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The next phrase is "*Sho'attah Hu Hashem Elokeinu V'Elokei Avoseinu LeOlam Va'ed*--that You are our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers forever." HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, first points out that *Atta Hu* puts together the second and third 'person', which is similar to all of our brachos, in which we say: "*Atta Hashem*"--noting our unique relationship to Hashem both in the second and third 'person'. We then continue stating that Hashem is our *Elokeinu*, before mentioning that he is *Elokei Avoseinu*. Our relationship with Hashem is primarily based on our own closeness to Hashem, but the basis of this ability is definitely Hashem's bond with the Avos. [This concept is similar to the words of the Shira where the Pasuk says "*Zeh Keili V'Anveihu Elokei Avi VeAromemenu*"--in which we first express our personal relationship with Hashem, before 'going back' to describe our forefathers' connection with Him.] HaRav Friedlander points out that *Elokeinu V'Elokei Avoseinu LeOlam Va'ed* describes our closeness to Hashem in

**three time periods**, the present--*Elokeinu*, the past--*Elokei Avoseinu*, and the future--*LeOlam Va'ed*. We then continue with two further descriptions of our relationship with Hashem--*Tzur Chayeinu* and *Magen Yisheinu*--the Rock of our life and the Shield of our salvation. By the 'Rock' of our life, we mean that our living breaths have a source in Him, He is the Rock from which our lives or hewn, and also that He is a Rock upon Whom we lean and support ourselves, as the Pasuk (Devarim 32:37) expressly states "*Tzur Chasayu Vo*--the Rock Whom all of our trust is in." By the term "*Magen Yisheinu*--the Shield of our salvation" we recognize that Hashem shields us from *tzaros* even before they come (*Magen*), and even if they do come, He saves us from the *tzara* (*Yisheinu*). We have only begun the Bracha--and we see how packed it is with precious and priceless meaning!

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The next phrase is "*Atta Hu*--You are". This is the **second time** within the first several words of the Bracha that we recite the phrase *Atta Hu*--representing our **unique relationship** to Hashem in the second and third 'person' is mentioned within the Bracha. The next phrase is "*L'Dor VaDor*--from generation to generation". The *Iyun Tefillah* presents two possibilities as to the meaning of this phrase within the Bracha. The first is that it concludes the previous words of *Tzur Chayeinu Magen Yisheinu Atta Hu--L'Dor VaDor*. In other words, we thank Hashem for being the Rock of our life (as described yesterday) and the Shield of our salvation (as described yesterday) from generation to generation--for, as we describe in the Haggadah, "*Bechol Dor VaDor...in each and every generation they stand up to destroy us.*" A second p'shat in *L'Dor VaDor*, writes the *Iyun Tefillah*, is that it is the introduction to the next phrase of *Nodeh Lecha U'Nesaper Tehillasecha*--meaning that in each generation we thank You for the unique gifts and Hashgacha that You give to that generation. Indeed, the Chasdei Hashem change in accordance with the needs of the time and the needs of the place. The difference between the terms *Nodeh* and *Nesaper* is that *Nodeh* refers to our thanks personally as expressed directly to Hashem, while *Nesaper* means that we relate to others and publicize that which Hashem has done for us (as in the popular song taken from the Pasuk in Tehillim (107:8) "*Yodu Lashem Chasdo VeNifliosav Livnei Adam*"). While it may be inappropriate to sing the words of Modim--we can certainly feel the joy while expressing our thanks!

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Yesterday, we noted the difference between *Nodeh Lecha* and *U'Nesaper Tehillasecha*. Now, the Bracha lists specific categories of what we thank Hashem for:

- 1) "*Al Chayeinu HaMesurim BeYadecha*"--for our lives that are in Your hands--i.e., that we live and breathe! Hashem's Chesed is so great that we continue to live even during the time that we speak Lashon Hara, as we walk in late to shul, as we disturb someone's learning, as we pain someone physically or with words. Moreover, with every moment of life He grants us here, He gives us the opportunities we need to be *zoche* to more and more life--in this world, and the eternal life of Olam Haba.
- 2) "*VeAl Nishmoseinu HaPekudos Lach*"--and for our souls that are deposited with You every evening, which are returned refreshed in the morning. Even if we owe Hashem huge apologies for what we did the day before, He still graciously renews us for another day, hopefully of betterment. We very well understand why before going to sleep, we recite the Pasuk

“*BeYadecha Afkid Ruchi Padisa Osi Hashem Kel Emes*”, and when we arise why we recite “*Modeh Ani Lefanecha...!*”

3) “*VeAl Nisecha Shebechol Yom Imanu*”--and for the miracles that are with us every day. This means to include not the major miracles, but the more private, hidden miracles that keep the person going every day...the continuous miracles of the human body, one’s physical and mental health, one’s Parnassah....

4) “*VeAl Nifliosecha VeTovosecha She’bechol Eis, Erev, Vavoker, VeTzaharayim*”--and for the wonders of life and for the goodness that we see bestowed upon us--at all times, evening, morning and afternoon. Some learn that the phrase *Erev, Vavoker, VeTzaharayim* refers back to when we thank Hashem--at all times, morning, evening and during the day. Others learn that it refers to when He showers His wonders and goodness upon us--every day, throughout the day. Both are certainly true!

We note that one should definitely put his thought into the four concepts above, personalizing them to one’s own life, especially thinking of particular examples as he recites the words (and they certainly can be different examples daily--Boruch Hashem!)

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The next phrases of the Bracha are:

1. “*HaTov Ki Lo Chalu Rachamecha VeHaMerachem Ki Lo Samu Chasadecha...--Hashem is the Good One Whose mercies are never exhausted and the Merciful One Whose kindnesses never end.*” The commentaries explain that Hashem has *Rachmanus* on us and spares us punishments that we may otherwise deserve, and then, beyond not punishing us--He showers His unending *Chesed* upon us.

2. “*VeAl Kulam Yisborach VeYisromam Shimcha Malkeinu--and for all of these may Your Name be blessed and exalted our King continuously and forever.*” Here, in recognition ‘of all the above’ all of the Chasdei Hashem which we have mentioned until this point, we ask that Hashem *allow the entire world* to recognize that Hashem is *Baruch*--the source of all blessing and *Romeim*--exalted above all. With the term *Shimcha* we express that we really cannot fathom Hashem, but just that we know Him by how He conducts Himself in this world--which is His ‘Name’ so to speak. This sought after time of *Yisborach V’Yisromam* will also be a time of “*VeChol HaChaim Yoducha Selah VeYehalelu Es Shimcha BeEmes...--* when everyone alive will thank You forever and truly recognize and praise You.”

3. The Bracha concludes: “*Baruch Atta Hashem HaTov Shimcha U’lecha Na’eh LeHodos--* Whose Name is Good and to Whom it is pleasant to give thanks.” Here, we recognize that all of Hashem’s actions in this world emanate from His Good, and we make it clear that we are thanking Hashem not only because it is the right thing to do as HaKaras HaTov, but--because we feel true pleasure in doing so!

## **19. SIM SHALOM**

A. HaRav Yonasan Eibenschutz, Z'tl, writes that Shalom is the "**Keshar HaNechmad**", in which all of Klal Yisroel unites. Accordingly, when one davens for Shalom, he is praying that there should no longer be any Machlokes, Kinah, or Sinah, but rather that we should unite with **Ahavah Achvah and Reius**. In fact, HaRav Eibenschutz continues that one should have Kavannah here to fulfill the Mitzvah of the V'Ahavta L'Reiacha Komacha! The Sefer *Olas Tamid* specifically adds that we should daven to be free of war and of chayos (perhaps our contemporary form of this would be terrorist attacks).

B. In the *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah*, HaRav Meyer Birnbaum, Shlita, brings from the Rabbeinu Bachya and the Malbim that we should have Kavannah for the Shalom of our bodies, household, community, and all of our possessions--that no bad or pe'ga occurs to them.

C. As we have noted, the Bracha of Sim Shalom (in Nusach Ashkenaz) contains the word Shalom itself **four times** and the Shoresh of the word Bracha **six times!** With this, we can well understand why every Siyum concludes with the bracha of Shalom--*Hashem Oz LeAmo Yitein--Hashem Yivarech Es Amo BaShalom*. As Rabbeinu Yonah writes: "*Shalom Hu Kollel LeChol Tov SheBaOlam V'Ein Tachlis Letoalto*--Shalom includes all good of the world and there is no end to the benefit it provides." Accordingly, although we may be tired at the end of Shemone Esrei--just as at Neilah we lift our spirit to provide that essential last stage of Kavanna--so too here should we make sure to rise to the great occasion of asking Hashem to shower us with the bracha of Shalom in every circumstance--personally and behalf of all of Klal Yisroel!

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A. The Sefer *Boruch SheAmar* explains that the term *Sim* is the first word of this Bracha, in which we ask Hashem to provide Shalom, Tova, Bracha, Chain, Chesed and Rachamim upon us and all of Klal Yisroel. The term *Sim (place)* is especially used, because unlike *Tein(give)* which may imply that it can be taken away, we instead ask--that the Bracha not only come but be placed--and *remain* with us!

B. The Bracha of Sim Shalom follows directly after Birchah Kohanim and obviously mirrors its three Brachos--*Yivarechecha, Ya'er, and Shalom*. *Ya'er* is represented in Sim Shalom by the words '*Ohr Panecha*'. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* explains that we ask that Hashem shed His light upon us in a way **that clearly shows His love for us** to all.

C. We further recite that Hashem has given us a *Toras Chaim*. What is the *Toras Chaim*? The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* brings from HaRav Pam, Z'tl, that it is a Torah that teaches us how to live!

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A. The *Tzeidah L'Derech* explains that the term Shalom comes from the root **Shalem** meaning completeness and fullness. This is why Shalom is all-encompassing--for it includes freedom from war, freedom from jealousy, freedom from sickness, etc. Even Hashem's Name is Shalom--for Hashem is everything! It is thus no coincidence--as it never is--for this bracha to be the final one in Shemone Esrei--for through it we ask for the completeness of all of the other Brachos.

B. At Mincha (Nusach Ashkenaz) and Ma'ariv, we ask not only for Sim Shalom but for Shalom Rav--a great amount of Shalom. HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains that it is because these hours can be a greater period of Din, and so the Bracha that we need for Shalom is greater.

C. We conclude our Shemone Esrei with a request for blessing all of Klal Yisroel with peace. Oh, how we should have Kavanna in these final words. We have Boruch Hashem completed our Series on the Nineteen Brachos of Shemone Esrei. Next week, we hope to focus on our personal Tefillos in Elokai Netzor. May Hashem accept all of our Tefillos this Rosh Hashana on behalf of our people--and may we witness the sweetness of **HaMevarech Es Amo Yisroel BaShalom!**

----- **SECOND SET** -----

The Levush writes that this Bracha corresponds to the words of the Malochim who recited “*Baruch Atta Hashem HaMevorech Es Amo Yisrael BaShalom*”, when Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael at the time of Yehoshua Bin Nun. Our Bracha immediately follows the Birkas Kohanim which ends with the word *Shalom*, and now we continue to emphasize its great need to us. Indeed, the Sefer *Ya'aros Devash* writes that in praying for peace in K'lal Yisrael, we should have Kavannah that we are fulfilling the Mitzvah of *V'Ahavta L'Reiacha Kamocha!* The first words of the Bracha are “*Sim Shalom Tovah U'vracha Chein VaChesed V'Rachamim Aleinu Ve'al Kol Yisrael Amecha*--place peace, good, blessing, graciousness, kindness and mercy upon us and upon all of Yisrael, Your nation.” The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* explains that ***Shalom*** (peace), includes many important facets--***Shalom HaGuf*** (physical and mental peace within oneself), ***Shalom Bayis*** (with all members of one's family), ***Shalom HaMedina*** (peace within the country and among countries), ***Shalom HaKinyanim*** (peace regarding all of one's possessions, with no disputes over them), and ***Shalom MiKol Pega Mikra U'Machlokes*** (peace from any incident, accident and dispute with others). Let us take a moment to reflect upon the fact that Birkas Kohanim concludes with *Shalom*, that bentsching concludes with *Shalom*, that davening concludes with *Shalom*--for us to recognize how essential *Shalom* is to our lives both individually as a person and collectively as part of K'lal Yisrael and indeed the world. **It is so essential that we have Kavannah in this Bracha--we must be sure to inspire ourselves and reinvigorate ourselves as we begin with the word 'Sim'.** Within the course of the Bracha we have the opportunity to mention the word '*Shalom*' (or its derivative) four times. Each mention of the word *Shalom* is truly a 'mouthful' and 'mindful'--and we should be sure to make it count!

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We continue with our request that Hashem give the bracha of Shalom, and the additional brachos that follow of Tovah, Bracha, Chein, Chesed and Rachamim to “*Aleinu Ve'al Kol Yisrael Amecha*”. We thus pray for *every individual* who is reciting this bracha together with us (*Aleinu*) as well as for all of K'lal Yisrael, who are *Amecha*--the Am Hashem. We note that Yisrael is placed before Amecha (as it is in the Bracha of *Retzei*) to perhaps first recall the *Zechus Avos* of Yaakov Avinu. We now proceed with a great request: “*Barcheinu Avinu Kulanu K'Echad BeOhr Panecha* --bless us Hashem all together with the light of Your countenance.” HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z'tl, explains that we can be *zoche* to the light of Hashem's countenance, i.e., a very special level of Dveikus to Him. **when we are bound together and united.** We were, for example, *zoche* to Hashem's *He'aras Panim* at the time of Matan Torah, when we

united together at Har Sinai (*VaYichan Sham Yisrael Neged HaHar*), as we specifically mention in the bracha: “**Ki Be’or Panecha Nasata Lanu Hashem Elokeinu Toras Chaim**--for with the light of Your countenance You gave us the living Torah.” As we recite these words, we should feel connected and united with the rest of K’lal Yisrael--hoping for Hashem’s He’aras Panim to come back to us once again!

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We begin the Bracha of *Sim Shalom* by asking Hashem for *Shalom, Tovah, U’Vracha*, and then once again, a bit later in the Bracha, we say that Hashem has given us *Tzedaka, U’Vracha, V’Rachamim*. Why is the term Bracha singled out--are not everything else like *Torah, Tzedakah, Shalom*, all brachos? HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, explains that the term *Bracha* refers back to Hashem’s blessing to Avrohom Avinu--“*VeHeyei Bracha*--you will be the source of bracha--giving bracha to others.” As Avrohom Avinu’s descendants, we are the *Ba’alei Bracha* for the world! We therefore ask that Hashem bring bracha to the world through us! The Bracha continues with the request of *VeTov BeAinecha Levarech Es Amecha Yisrael Bechol Ais U’Vechol Sha’ah Beshlomecha*--may it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people, Yisrael, in every season and in every hour with Your peace.” There are no two dates, and no two times in which the peace that is necessary is the same. One day, we primarily need peace from war in Eretz Yisrael; another from a terrorist act overseas. Moreover, as HaRav Schwab, Z’tl, points out: “If one would observe the entire globe from space at one time, he would not find one moment that the earth is free of strife, when there are no incidents of bloodshed, or when no one is endangering someone else’s life. **Therefore, at every moment of our lives-- Bechol Ais U’Vechol Sha’ah, we are dependent upon and plead for Shlomecha--Your Peace--Hashem’s special protection over us from wars and dangers of every kind and nature.**” Hakhel Note: Let us especially reflect on how desperately we always need--on an individual and collective basis--*Shlomecha*--Hashem’s peace to be upon us and with us!

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Before concluding the Bracha with Baruch Atta Hashem, we will proceed to the variation of this Bracha recited at Mincha and Ma’ariv (Nusach Sefard, Maariv only). The bracha begins with the words: “*Shalom Rav Al Amecha Yisrael Tasim LeOlam Ki Atta Hu Melech Adon Lechol Hashalom* --May You place abundant Shalom on Your people Yisrael, for You are the King, Master of all peace.” HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, suggests that the reason that we have a separate Nusach for Mincha and Ma’ariv is because the morning represents Hashem’s Midah of Chesed (as symbolized by Avrohom Avinu, whose great Midah was Chesed and who established Tefillas Shacharis), while the times of Mincha and Ma’ariv are times of Midas HaDin (as symbolized by Yitzchok Avinu whose Midah was Gevurah/Midas HaDin, and Yaakov Avinu, who blended Avrohom Avinu and Yitzchok Avinu’s Midos). Accordingly, we need **Shalom Rav--abundant Shalom**, in order to counteract all of the dangers and difficulties of Din that could lurk during this period. We then follow by especially reinforcing our absolute belief that Hashem is the complete *Melech Adon Lechol Hashalom*--King and Master over any and all aspects of peace--personal, communal and worldwide. Countries that are at war with us, leaders that threaten us, terrorists that want to attack us...they simply fall by the wayside if that is the will of the King and Master of peace. The words of this Bracha, when said with Kavannah

emphatically declare to Hashem that we know that we have come to the right place to ask for the greatest bracha to each of us individually and to all of us as a people--to Hashem--the *Melech Adon Lechol HaShalom!*

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Both *Sim Shalom* and *Shalom Rav* conclude in the same way: *VeTov BeAinecha Levarech Es Amecha Yisrael Bechol Eis U'Vechol Sha'ah Bishlomecha Baruch Atta Hashem HaMevorech Es Amo Yisroel BaShalom...* May it be good in Your eyes to bless Your nation Yisrael...Blessed are You Hashem Who blesses His people, Yisrael, with peace. The *Sifsei Chaim* points out that the term *bleses* is **in the present tense**, because HaKadosh Baruch Hu constantly brings peace to us, both personally and on a communal level. Indeed, even to the casual observer, threats of war, threats of violence and threats of ill-will, sometimes suddenly vanish. The *Eitz Yosef* teaches that Shemone Esrei ends with the word Shalom because **each Shemone Esrei was instituted in place of an Avodah in the Beis HaMikdash, and just as the Kohanim would give us Birkas Kohanim (which ends with the word Shalom) at the conclusion of their Avodah, so too, we follow suit and conclude with the great and all-inclusive bracha of Shalom as well.** The *Eitz Yosef* also explains that the reason the word Shalom is mentioned *exactly four times* in the bracha is to teach us that Hashem brings us peace after each one of the four galiyos--the four exiles. As we recite the very last word of Shemone Esei--**BaShalom** (i.e., the **fourth** time the word Shalom is mentioned), we should realize that we are both pleading with and thanking Hashem for the final and ultimate Shalom--from the fourth and last of exiles--may we sense and experience it speedily and in our day!

## **ELOKAI NETZOR**

A. Many, before reciting Elokai Netzor, first recite the Pasuk of *Yiheyu LeRatzon Imrei Fi...* (Tehillim 19:15). The Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 122, seif katan 8) brings from the *Seder HaYom* that this Pasuk has much powerful meaning here, as it has 10 words, 10 Yuds, begins and ends with a Yud, and is comprised of 42 letters representing the 42 letter name of Hashem. Accordingly, the Mishna Berurah writes: '*Vesodo Sod Gadol*', and 'accordingly, one should recite it slowly and with kavanna , and it will very much assist his Tefillos to be accepted and not to be returned empty...."

B. The first two Bakashos of Elokai Netzor relate--as you may have guessed--to pleading for Hashem's assistance in the area of speech---please save me from (a) Lashon Hora, and (b) from speaking falsehood or deceitfully. The Chofetz Chaim writes that before we can make this request we must demonstrate the willpower and desire to abandon these practices ourselves--and then we can ask for the Siyata DiShmaya in every and all situations!

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A. We continue with the request of *VeLimkalelai, Nafshi Sidom*--may I remain silent as the dirt of the earth to those who want to harm me. I don't want to anger or react--I want to be above those who are lowly. Note that we have just completed asking for assistance with our speech--we now ask for assistance with our silence!



B. With the next words *VeNafshi KeAffar Lakol Tihey* we pray to Hashem that we attain true resilience and humility. The mashal to dirt is important--for just as dirt is trodden upon but remains and even hardens--and just as vegetation and sustenance comes forth from the earth--so too may I be continuously blessed. Indeed, Hashem happily advised Avrohom Avinu (who had of course exclaimed 'VeAnoci Affar VeEifer')--that Vehaya Zaracha *KeAffar* HaAretz. We have different values than the rest of the world--Moshe Rabbeinu was especially marked as '*Anav Me'od*'--and this is what we strive for and desire to touch as well.

C. Then, we plead *Pesach Libi BeSoresecha*--I recognize that I need your help to attain my chelek in Torah--please **open up** all of the roads for my success. We may suggest that the heart in particular is used because it symbolizes emotion--and the greatest success in all areas of Torah learning is through joy. We daven to Hashem for the proper insight and attitude to attain the joy of Torah.

D. Next, *U'VeMitzvosecha Tirdof Nafshi*--there are many *tirdos* and *redifos*--many difficulties, tests, errands and tasks which occupy a person throughout the day--but I ask of You, Hashem, that my day be infused and suffused with a 'run' on Mitzvos--so that what I chase after in my life has true meaning and relevance--**not only in this world--but forever after!**

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A. In the next phrase we daven *VeChol HaChoshvim Alai Ra'ah Meheirah Hafer Atzasam, Vekalkel Machshavtam*. The Avudraham explains the juxtaposition between our previous request that Hashem empower us to chase after Mitzvos, with this request that he nullify our enemies' plans and designs against us. In the Avudraham's words: "For when one runs after Mitzvos, his enemies will not run after him, Middah K'neged Middah-- since he wants to pursue Mitzvos, Hashem will stop the enemy from pursuit!" The difference between *Hafer Atzasam* and *Kalkel Machshavtam*, explains HaRav Chaim Friedlander is that the Eitzah is closer to being put into action and therefor requires immediate action-- ***Meheirah Hafer Atzasam***, but if possible we ask that their original Machshava be thwarted to begin with-- *Kalkel Machshavtam*-- so that we do not even have to initially feel or sense the fear.

B. The next words of our personal Tefillah are *Asei LeMa'an Shemecha Asei LeMa'an Yeminecha, Asei LeMa'an Kedushasecha Asei LeMa'an Torasecha*. Incredibly, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 122:3) itself, based upon the Tur, actually writes that one who recites these words regularly is zoche to be ***MeKabel Pnei Shechina***. The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* explains each one of these phrases--let us have real Kavannah--remember the ASSURANCE of the Shulchan Aruch-- ***MeKabel Pnei Shechina!***:

*Asei LeMa'an Shemecha*--Please redeem us from our Golus, so that **Your Name** will no longer be disgraced among the nations.

*Asei LeMa'an Yeminecha*-- Please redeem us from our Golus, so that the **Might of Your Right Hand** (represented by great miracles) is no longer held back in this Golus.

*Asei LeMa'an Kedushasecha*-- Please redeem us from our Golus, so that everyone will realize that **you lead us B'Derech Kedusha**.

*Asei LeMa'an Torasecha*--please redeem us from our Golus, so that **we can all study Torah B'Shleimus**--which is what will happen when there is a Bais HaMikdash!

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A. We come close to concluding our Tefillah with the words *LeMa'an Yeichaltzun Yedidecha Hoshia Yeminecha VeAneini*. HaRav Chaim Friedlander explains that we refer to ourselves as *Yedidecha*, as we plead to Hashem **that He should save all of Klal Yisroel from its Tzaros not because of our own Zechuyos, but rather because we are his Yedid--we more than any other people are close to Him**. We further ask Hashem to save us with *Yemincha* --His Right Hand which symbolizes open miracles--as we look forward to great days and great events, may they come soon (we are in a solid time--today, 8 Tishrei, is the first day of the Inauguration of the First Bais Hamikdash by Shlomo HaMelech) . The final word of *Aneini* is movingly related to the Tefillah of Eliyahu HaNavi on Har HaKarmel as he fought against the neviei haba'al for the sake of Klal Yisroel--where he exclaimed *Aneini Hashem Aneini!* We should use it with the same feeling!

B. We now have the opportunity of **reciting Yehiyu LeRatzon again**--a second privilege to repeat the last Pasuk of Kepitel 19 of Tehillim with all of its import and meaning as previously discussed. We note that with the term *Hegyon Libi* we uniquely ask that Hashem not only hear the words of our prayers--**but that He even answer us for the requests of our hearts even we were unable to properly express them. What a powerfully encompassing Tefillah--how important our Kavannah is here!**

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A. Immediately preceding recitation of Yehiyu L'Ratzon, many have the custom of reciting the Pasuk/ Pesukim which begins with the first letter of their name(s), and ends with the last letter of their name(s). The Chofetz Chaim in Sefer *Shemiras Halashon* (II:9) provides a detailed explanation for this custom.

B. The Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 122, seif katan 8) brings from the Sefer *Chayei Adam* that there are now other additional personal requests that a person should make daily at this point in the davening--and if one cannot make them well in Lashon HaKodesh, he can make them in another language--as long as they come 'mikiros libo--from the depths of his heart'!

C. We then take three steps back **in a singular bowed position**, and after having taken the three steps back, we turn to our left (bowed) and recite "Oseh Shalom Bimromav", then turn to our right (bowed) and recite "Hu Ya'aseh Shalom Aleinu", and then face ahead (bowed) and recite the words "Ve'Al Kol Yisroel VeImru Amen." With these words and this action, we leave the presence of the King in a most respectful manner--and once again noticeably asking for Shalom--as we do *at the end* of Birkas Kohanim, in the *last* Bracha of Shemone Esrei, at the end of Kaddish, and at the end of Birkas HaMazon. For additional amazing reasons for taking three steps back, see Bais Yosef to Tur Shulcha Aruch 123, and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 123: Mishna Berura, seif katan 2.

D. We then conclude with the *Yehi Ratzon* that the Bais HaMikdash be rebuilt so that our Avodah can be fulfilled in its highest and its most pristine form in the Bais HaMikdash--for we know that “*VeArva LaHashem Minchas Yehuda V’Yerushalayim*” --**this will be the most pleasant thing for Hashem and, accordingly, this is our most sought after Avodah!**

----- **SECOND SET** -----

A. Many, before reciting Elokai Netzor, first recite the Pasuk of *Yihayu Lekatzon Imrei Fi.* (Tehillim 19: 15) The Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 122, seif katan 8) brings from the *Seder HaYom* that this Pasuk has much powerful meaning here, as it has 10 words, 10 Yuds, begins and ends with a Yud, and is comprised of 42 letters representing the 42 letter name of Hashem. Accordingly, the Mishna Berurah writes: ‘*Vesodo Sod Gadol*’, and ‘accordingly, one should recite it slowly and with kavanna , and it will very much assist his Tefillos to be accepted and not to be returned empty ....’

B. The first two Bakashos of Elokai Netzor relate--as you may have guessed--to pleading for Hashem’s assistance in the area of speech---please save me from (a) Lashon Hara, and (b) from speaking falsehood or deceitfully. The Chofetz Chaim writes that before we can make this request we must demonstrate the willpower and desire to abandon these practices ourselves--and then we can ask for the Siyata DiShmaya in every and all situations!

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Today, we begin with the phrase: “*Elokai Netzor Leshoni Mairah U’Sefasai MiDaber Mirmah--* Hashem, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully.” This request is obviously based on the very similar Pasuk in Tehillim (34:13): “***Netzor Leshonecha Mairah U’Sefasecha MiDabeir Mirmah.***” It is extremely important for us to realize the two Pesukim which precede this Pasuk (Pesukim 12 and 13). There, Dovid HaMelech writes: “*Lechu Bonim Shimu Li Yiras Hashem Alamedchem Mi Halsh HaChofetz Chaim Ohev Yamim Liros Tov...* the fear of Hashem I will teach you, who is the man that desires life who loves days of seeing good.” Startlingly, then, the Pasuk of ***Netzor Leshonecha Mairah*** answers two questions--**how does one attain Yiras Hashem and who is one who wants life.**” It is no small wonder, then, that at the very top of our personal requests, we ask for Hashem’s assistance with what we say and how we say it. With this assistance, we will be on the road to ***Yiras Hashem*** and ***Chayim*** itself! HaRav Chaim Friedlander, Z’tl, adds that over the Shemone Esrei we have used our mouth for very positive things--our expressions of thanks and our requests to Hashem as the Source of all. **We accordingly ask Hashem that we continue to use our mouths properly even as we conclude this Tefillah.** Next, we continue with the phrase: “*VeLimkalelai Nafshi Sidom VeNafshi Keafar Lakol Tihyeh--*and regarding those who curse me let my soul be silent, and let my soul be like dust to everyone.” We ask here for Hashem’s help in gaining humility--not responding to those who attack us even for no good reason, and furthermore, meriting not even to feel pain from the intended insult or words of hurt. Thus, in the first phrase of Elokai Netzor, we davened for protection for our mouths--and in this phrase we daven for protection from the mouths of others. As the classic Vidui booklet points out, sins of speech constitute a substantial

portion of the sins we will be reciting Vidui about on Yom Kippur. Our sincere Tefillos now--*in Elokai Netzor*--can go a long way towards demonstrating our sincerity in improving our ways!

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Today, we begin with the phrase: “*P’sach Libi BeSoresecha U’VeMitzvosecha Tirdof Nafshi* -- open my heart to Your Torah and may my soul pursue Your commandments.” Here, we ask not only that we be given the ability to study--but that Hashem open our hearts so that our study is successful and fulfilling. We then ask for Hashem’s assistance not only to perform the Mitzvos--but *to pursue* the Mitzvos--which indicates a true understanding and appreciation of them. When one cherishes something, he runs after it. We then continue to plead with Hashem as follows: “*VeChol HaChoshevim Alai Ra’ah Meheirah Hafer Atzasam VeKalkel Machshevasam*--and for those who intend to do me harm, speedily void their plans and spoil their intentions.” What an important request--especially at a time when different enemies--from terrorists to so-called world leaders seek to *r’l* harm us, if not *r’l* obliterate us. Here is our opportunity, daily--three times a day--to ask Hashem to thwart their intentions. Why should their designs be deterred? “*Asei LeMa’an Shemecha, Asei LeMa’an Yeminecha, Asei LeMa’an Kedushasecha, Asei LeMa’an Torasecha*--if not for our sake, so that Kiddush Hashem will prevail in the world, with everyone recognizing the Malchus of Hashem, and the world is once and for all brought to its fulfillment!”

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Today, we continue with the phrase: “*LeMa’an Yeichaletzun Yedidecha Hoshiah Yiminecha VeAneini*--so that Your beloved one may be saved--let Your right hand save and respond to me.” As we are about to conclude Shemone Esrei, with these six words we make a very powerful request--for with these words, the *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* explains, we are asking Hashem to save us from *all Tzaros*, that Hashem save us by *Nes*--open miracle (which is symbolized by Hashem’s right hand), and in the final word, we call out “*VeAneini*--Hashem please **answer my Tefillah**.” Let us remember that Yom Kippur is referred to as *Yishi*--the day of my Yeshuah. We have a chance every day with these words to ask for Hashem’s Yeshuah as well. Certainly in these few days before Yom Kippur and on Yom Kippur itself we should instill spirited Kavannah into *LeMa’an Yeichaletzun Yididecha Hoshiah Yiminecha VeAneini*!

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Today we conclude with our series on Shemone Esrei--with the very last phrases of *Elokai Netzor*:

A. Immediately preceding recitation of *Yehiyu L’Ratzon*, many have the custom of reciting the Pasuk/ Pesukim which begins with the first letter of their name(s), and ends with the last letter of their name(s). The Chofetz Chaim in Sefer *Shemiras Halashon* (II:9) provides a detailed explanation for this custom:

B. The Mishna Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 122, seif katan 8) brings from the Sefer *Chayei Adam* that there are now other additional personal requests that a person should make daily at this point in the davening--and if one cannot make them well in Lashon HaKodesh, he

can make them in another language--as long as they come '*mikiros libo*--from the depths of his heart'!

C. We then take three steps back **in a singular bowed position**, and after having taken the three steps back, we turn to our left (bowed) and recite "*Oseh Shalom Bimromav*", then turn to our right (bowed) and recite "*Hu Ya'aseh Shalom Aleinu*", and then face ahead (bowed) and recite the words "*Ve'Al Kol Yisroel VeImru Amen.*" With these words and this action, we leave the presence of the King in a most respectful manner--and once again noticeably asking for Shalom--as we do *at the end* of Birkas Kohanim, in the *last* Bracha of Shemone Esrei, at the end of Kaddish, and at the end of Birkas HaMazon. For additional amazing reasons for taking three steps back, see Bais Yosef to Tur Shulchan Aruch 123, and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 123: Mishna Berurah, seif katan 2.

D. We then conclude with the *Yehi Ratzon* that the Bais HaMikdash be rebuilt so that our Avodah can be fulfilled in its highest and its most pristine form in the Bais HaMikdash--for we know that "*VeArva LaHashem Minchas Yehuda V'Yerushalayim*" --**this will be the most pleasant thing for Hashem and, accordingly, this is our most sought after Avodah!**