

PRAYER POINTS

ALWAYS HAVE SPIRITUALITY IN MIND

In describing man's purpose on earth, a Jewish sage states that the Almighty breathed life into man "to recognize Him and to fear Him and [for us] to rule over our desires and all their outcomes." By placing this task before man, the Almighty devised a means for him to grow spiritually and earn Heaven's abundant benevolence and blessing.

How, then, can one approach the Almighty in prayer and ask for exactly those worldly needs that the Almighty wants man to overcome? Is a person not asking the Almighty to work against His own plan?

The sages say the question is partially answered by the fact that from the fourth to the ninth blessings of the Shemoneh Esrei mandated that a person pray for his material needs. Thus, it is clear that there is not only room for praying for material needs, but doing so is actually an integral part of prayer and of our spiritual quest to grow close to God through prayer.

The Almighty is close to all who call upon Him – to all who call upon Him in truth [Psalm 145:18]. This verse teaches that truth is an essential element of one's prayers. "True" prayers are those that arise from the beseecher's desire to come closer to the truth, which means that he seeks to come closer to the Almighty.

At the end of the Shemoneh Esrei one says: "Asei Ieman Shemecha – Act for Your name's sake."

A person who lives his life utilizing his material blessings for spiritual purposes infuses his personal prayers with the power of spiritual prayers. Although one prays for personal [material] needs, the purpose of such prayers is to serve the Almighty.

There is yet another source of strength that assures the ascent of such prayers for material needs: When prayers for material needs are said for the sake of Heaven they become transformed and are united with others' prayers as one tremendously powerful prayer. Such a prayer bears the strength of its common denominator: the desire of all the Almighty's children everywhere who pray to be granted the means to serve the Almighty – learning Torah and doing it.

Clinging to a vision of one's spiritual purpose is thus a powerful means of ensuring the acceptability of one's prayers. When we ask that our prayers draw us closer to the Almighty, we affirm our desire to fulfill our purpose in this world. The Almighty, in turn, provides us with the means to succeed at – our and His – mission.

POINTS TO PONDER

Despite the fact that man is created for a spiritual purpose, the Almighty allows us to pray for our material needs.

The Almighty answers those who call upon Him “in truth.”

Material prayers with a spiritual purpose are united with all of Klal Yisrael’s prayers, and thereby carry vastly greater merit than personal prayers alone.

Psalm 92:1 A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath. It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High. (ESV)