

Torah Insights

Prayer During Aseret Yemai Teshuvah Are Relevant Every Day

by Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman

During Aseret Yemai Teshuvah (Ten Days of Penitence or Return), from *Rosh HaShanah* until *Yom Kippur*, we rely upon God's mercy to grant us a good year ahead. In the prominent prayer that we say on the High Holy Days, in the prayer אבינו מלכנו - Our Father, Our King, we make reference to God's mercy no fewer than five times. We beseech God to forgive our misdeeds and grant us a good year, not necessarily based on our righteousness, but rather upon God's mercy and compassion.

In our daily *Amidah*, we say הטוב כי לא כלו רחמיך והמרחם כי לא תמו חסדיך - O Thou who is all good, whose miracles never cease; Merciful One, whose mercies (kindnesses) never cease. Here again, we are grateful to God for all his kindness to us, not based on our righteousness, but upon God's mercy and compassion.

God is often referred to as אבינו - our Father. We say: אם כבנים רחמנו כרחם אב על בנים - if we are children, then show us mercy as a Father shows mercy to his children. This reliance on God as our merciful Father is also found in our daily prayers.

The phrase אבינו אב הרחמן המרחם רחם עלינו - Our Father, merciful Father, thou who is ever compassionate, have mercy on us. This prayer is said in the paragraph/blessing prior to the recitation of the שמע ישראל - Shma Yisrael, Hear O Israel. Here again, we are appealing to those attributes of mercy and compassion that a Father has for a child. A father has love and compassion for his child. So too, we pray that God will demonstrate His mercy and compassion for His children.

Perhaps the placement of the phrase in ברכת הודאה - the Thanksgiving blessing is meant to remind us that in this blessing especially that we need to remember that God's compassion for us does not derive from our merits, rather it derives from God's goodness. And, prior to reciting the שמע ישראל - Shma, we need to remember that we are ready to accept the yoke of God's Kingship, and that it is due to His mercy and compassion that we receive his Fatherly blessings with love.

from *UPDATE*, September 2009 revised October, 2010
by Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman