



# TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

## TEFILLA

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### שים שלום

*This past Shabbos I was privileged to tap into a very special experience. In our house, we have a tradition that whoever is in bidul (isolation) or has Corona joins in the Shabbos meal from the top of the stairs. This way, they are far enough away so that they do not spread germs, but close enough to feel part of the Shabbos experience. This week it was my turn. Sitting on top of the stairs and looking down at my family from above, I felt an overpowering of emotion. I looked at each child and was filled with pride. I noticed all the details – their sweetness, their eagerness to help, their singing, their happiness. (what I didn't notice was the kid who ran away from the table or the bickering on the side – the distance helped to put that out of my view) And I was blown away. And I was filled with an intense prayer that this goodness should only continue forever.*

It hit me that this experience could help us to understand the bracha of שים שלום.

שים שלום is the very last bracha of Shemoneh Esrei and the end of the third section, which we explained previously is the section in which we take leave of Hashem with the hope that our relationship has been enhanced through our Tefilla.

It's strange though because on the surface level, it appears like שים שלום is a shopping list of requests and should really belong in

the middle section of בקשות.

שים שלום טובה וברכה, חן וחסד ורחמים, עלינו ועל- כל ישראל עמך. ברכנו אבינו כלנו כאחד באור פניך, כי באור-פניך נתת לנו ה' אלקינו תורת חיים ואהבת חסד, וצדקה וברכה ורחמים וחסדים ושלום. וטוב בעיניך לברך את כל עמך ישראל בכל עת ובכל שעה בשלומך: ברוך אתה ה', המברך את-עמו ישראל בשלום.

*Bestow peace, goodness and blessing, life, graciousness, kindness and mercy, upon us and upon all Your people Israel. Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance. For by the light of Your countenance You gave us, Hashem our Gd, the Torah of life and loving-kindness, righteousness, blessing, mercy, life and peace. May it be favorable in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel, at all times and at every moment, with Your peace. Blessed are You Hashem, who blesses His people Israel with peace.*

Here, we seemingly ask Hashem for peace, goodness, blessing, life, graciousness, kindness, and mercy. This seems the epitome of a request bracha. Why is this a fitting bracha to end off the Shemoneh Esrei with?

Rabbi Yisroel Shlomo Goldfinger writes in his book תהילות ישראל that in this bracha, we are not making a request, but rather expressing our desire to come closer to Hashem. Like we wrote regarding the brachot of רצה and מודים, we are expressing our sincere hope that our Shemoneh Esrei has not only succeeded in getting our requests granted, but more importantly

that it has succeeded in creating a real and genuine relationship between us and HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

In this bracha, we are expressing to Hashem that our requests be answered not just in a technical way, but in a way that creates a connection between us. We hope that Hashem will grant us our requests with love and mercy, peace and goodness, bringing us even closer than we were before.

Going back to my personal story at the beginning of this article, it is our hope that Hashem will look down at us and see us through the lens of שלום טובה וברכה, חן וחסד ורחמים. That when He looks at us, all He will see is goodness and a feeling of pride and love. Through this אור פניך, special glow radiating from Hashem, He will be then overwhelmed with a desire

to bestow upon us all the goodness in the world. Not because we made a request and now He is going to fill those requests in a very technical way, but because He is overcome with love for us and sees us in such a positive light that He only wants to continue that goodness forever. טובו בעיניך לברך את כל עמך ישראל בכל עת ובכל שעה בשלומך – that it will be good in His eyes to just continue showering bracha upon us at every given moment.

This is indeed the most fitting way to close our Shemoneh Esrei, a Tefilla which when done properly, will bring us infinitely close to our Creator.

*Editor's Note – For honesty sake, it's only fair to say that the angelic experience of Friday night did not necessarily continue through the rest of Shabbos, but it was a great moment even if only temporary.... ☺*

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