

PRAYER POINTS

AVINU MALKEINU: OUR FATHER OUR KING

One learns that the concept of Hashem as “Our Father, Our King” is essential to praying for Divine mercy. In fact, one rabbi writes that the prayer *Avinu Malkeinu* was established to correspond to the middle *Berachot* of the *Amidah*, in which one asks Hashem to fulfill all his needs. During the times when these needs are especially acute for the people of Israel scattered all over the world, the words *Avinu Malkeinu* – and the underlying reliance on Hashem that they reflect – convey these petitions in the most favorable light possible.

One prays for a wide range of personal and communal needs. This concept – Our Father Our King – is so powerful a channel of Divine favor that it has been incorporated as a daily feature in the prayers of the Ten Days of Repentance between Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur.

The prophet advises: *Seek Hashem when He can be found; call upon Him when He is near.* The sages explain that this verse refers to the Ten Days of Repentance. In this time of special closeness to Hashem, it is as if the King has temporarily come to live in the house next door. For this short period, ordinary people have extraordinary access to Hashem every day. Yet, are we limited to then special time a year? Can we not come before our Father any time the need arises or simply to say thank you?

As the sages established for all time, the words of *Avinu Malkeinu* are the ones chosen to be recited in requesting Hashem’s mercy in even the most perilous situations.

Another sage explains that a father desires to give his all for his child but is limited in what he can give. A king has everything as his disposal but does not always desire to give. Identifying Hashem as *Avinu Malkeinu* – our Father in Heaven Who is also the King with unlimited resources at His disposal – creates a reality in prayer that can make one’s trust in Hashem to fulfill *all* his needs authentic and vibrant.

Interestingly, the Father-child connection one builds with Hashem enhances, rather than diminishes, the sense of His Kingship and power, for in going beyond the bounds of judgment and showing mercy, Hashem demonstrates that there are no limits to His power. As a wise King, He must rule firmly over His subjects, but as a loving Father, He bears no restraints in showing boundless benevolence to His son.

POINTS TO PONDER

The sages teach that approaching Hashem as “Our Father, Our King” is especially potent in eliciting His mercy in times of need.

“Avinu Malkeinu” is a central theme in the davening of Yom Teruah and the Ten Days of Repentance, specifically because it is the Father-child relationship that evokes Hashem’s unconditional benevolence.

Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. (ESV)