

PRAYING with *Fire*

PRAYER POINTS

THE SCENARIO UNFOLDS

Communities have always longed for the Ultimate Redemption. Throughout history, when **facing persecution**, suffering, and exile, many have hung their hopes on the possibility that, **before things** get any worse, the **Redemption** would arrive. In recent years, however, it is **not only** widespread oppression and suffering that spur our thoughts of the Final **Redemption**. Rather, it is the awesome realization that we are watching events unfold **precisely** along the plotline of an end-of-days script written thousands of years ago.

Not only are we seeing the predicted moral decay of mankind but also, the playing out of conflicts with age-old enemies who surround Eretz Yisrael. The rabbinic writings seem to describe present-day, not Biblical, events: “People who dwell on the borders will wander about from town to town,” as the borders will be attacked at various points, so that the inhabitants will be driven from town to town.

In our time, it seems as though evil permeates the air, just waiting to seep into any available breach, in Israel and anywhere in the world. Increased vigilance has averted many disasters, but each of us knows that human efforts are not foolproof. Every foiled plan discloses more of our enemies’ depravity and disregard for innocent life.

The Gemara (one collection of rabbinic writings) asks what we are to do in this era of total helplessness and decay. Upon whom can we rely, upon whom shall we place our faith and hope? The answer is: “*Al Avinu Sheba’shamayim* – on our Father in Heaven.”

This concept forms the basis of all *tefillah* (prayer). By calling out to Hashem for our everyday needs, we show our complete reliance on Him. As we pray, we remind ourselves that our success is not dependent on any political, military, or financial achievement. Rather, it is our prayers, fueled by firm *emunah* (faith) in Hashem, which will usher in the Final Redemption.

Our Father is near at hand, His “ear” open to our prayers, and His love for us guaranteed forever. For *which is a great nation that has a God Who is close to it, as is Hashem, our God, whenever we call to Him?* One rabbinic writing implies that the words “whenever we call to Him” refer especially to times of oppression and anxiety. These words convey to us that *tefillah* is the very essence of the close bond between Hashem and His people. It is the indestructible lifeline of our rescue, and when we grasp it with all our might, our salvation is assured because of His promise of a *Kinsman Redeemer*.

POINTS TO PONDER

Current world events reflect the description given for the turbulent times preceding the coming of Mashiach.

The rabbis teach that, in times of trouble, we have only Hashem on Whom to rely.

The Torah tells us that Hashem is especially close to His people and answers whenever we call to Him.

The coming of Mashiach will be Hashem’s answer to our prayers.

Psalm 5:3 Heed the sound of my cry, my king and God, for I pray to You. (TNK)