

# AN INDIVIDUAL REQUEST

*by Ben Goldberg*

Last class we reviewed the sixth blessing of the Shemoneh Esrai, taking a close look at our request for forgiveness. Today, we will continue looking at the middle blessings and review the seventh blessing overall – the request for salvation and redemption. As always, let's first review the actual text of the blessing:

**"Behold our affliction, take up our grievance, and redeem us speedily for Your Name's sake, for You are a powerful Redeemer. Blessed are You, HaShem, Redeemer of Israel."**

Those who have been following this course from the beginning know that we have recently been reviewing the thirteen middle blessings of the Shemoneh Esrai. We are taught that the first six of these blessings discuss an individual's personal needs (such as our request for intellect, for forgiveness, and, as we will discuss next week, health) while the final six deal with the needs of the Jewish community as a whole. The thirteenth and final middle blessing incorporates all twelve blessings.

If this is true, the blessing we are reviewing today seems out of place. Isn't a request for redemption more appropriate as a communal blessing? Why does this blessing appear in the first six individual blessings?

The Beis Yosef explains that this blessing is not a request for the days of Mashiach and the Final Redemption but rather a plea to be redeemed from our personal struggles. Everybody, no matter how blessed they may seem, encounters challenges and difficulties throughout their life. Maybe it's financial, maybe it's having children, maybe it's in finding a spouse – no matter what, everybody must encounter challenges. This blessing allows us to call out to G-d and cry for help in dealing with these challenges.

Very early in this course, we discussed how the miracle of prayer allows us one-on-one time with G-d, who controls the world and everything that happens in it. We've been granted an incredible opportunity to pour our hearts out to the only One who can truly solve our problems. As we recite this blessing, we should think about all of the burdens weighing us down, all of the difficulties keeping us up at night. We should feel those burdens leave as we call out to HaShem for help.

And HaShem is always available to help. This is why we refer to Him as the "Redeemer" of Israel, in the present tense. G-d is available to help with any problem at any time – He is merely waiting for us to ask for help.