

THE SIXTEENTH BLESSING: HEAR OUR PRAYER

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

"Hear our voice, Hashem our G-d, pity and be compassionate to us, and accept - with compassion and favor - our prayer, for You are G-d Who hears prayers and supplications. Do not turn us away empty-handed from before Yourself, our King, for You hear the prayers of Your people Israel with compassion. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who hears prayers."

In the second half of Shemoneh Esrei, we ask for the ingathering of the exiles and the return of Torah rule, the downfall of the evil and the rise of the righteous, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the kingship of David. It would seem that these blessings come together to create a perfect picture of what Jews are praying for on a national level. Yet after nearly 2,000 years, we have still not been answered. What can we do so that our prayers will at last be fulfilled?

Our situation can be likened to a man in trouble, who was given an audience with a high-ranking official. The distressed man explained his problem and asked the official to exert his influence in order to help him. But his request fell on deaf ears, and the official seemed poised to send him away empty-handed.

In a final burst of desperation, the man broke down and tearfully begged the official to find it in his heart to help him. Unable to remain unmoved in the face of this sincere display of emotion, the official agreed to help.

The sixteenth blessing of Shemoneh Esrei is this last-ditch plea. We turn to Hashem with an emotional cry to hear the urgency in our voice, and finally grant us that for which we begged Him so many times. If we can muster up the true desire in our heart for that which we request, we will surely be answered quickly.

There is always a danger in taking such an approach. The listener may be temporarily moved to comply with what we ask, but later on may feel that he was manipulated into doing something against his will. For this reason we ask Hashem to accept our prayers with both compassion and favor, in order that our requests should not strain our relationship with Him.

The words of Shemoneh Esrei paint a picture of how the Jewish people are meant to be. If our prayers emanate from the heart, they will bring about the fulfillment of that vision.

Text Copyright © 2010 by Rabbi Daniel Travis and [Torah.org](https://torah.org)

