

# AVINU MALKEINU

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

"Avinu Malkeinu"-Our Father our King; be gracious with us and answer us, though we have no worthy deeds, treat us with us charity and kindness and save us! (Machzor)

These are concluding words of Avinu Malkeinu- Our Father, our King, which is a prayer that we recite on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur and the days in between. It is based on a Talmudic account of a successful heavenly appeal launched by the great Rabbi Akiva. (Tractate Taanis 25B) It's not clear why this particular formulation proved more potent than other attempts to bring a timely rain but it worked and so we employ an expanded adaptation on these auspicious days. Perhaps it's the balanced approach between two necessary ingredients, as we relate to our Creator as both a loving Father and a King to be feared. Looking over the 44 bold requests listed in the full length version spelled out in our Siddurim and Machzorim it's hard to figure which are the petitions of a servant pleading to his king and which represent the call of a son to his adoring dad. It may not be necessary that they be categorized this way or the other and even if there is a distinction to be made it might not be detectable from the text alone. How else can one figure if this an "Avinu" or a "Malkeinu" dominant request?

The Dubno Maggid ztl. had a revealing insight into the "Avinu Malkeinu". He wondered why the first 43 requests are boldly shouted out loud while the last one- listed above, is said in a quiet undertone. Not surprisingly he answered with a parable: A wealthy merchant was a frequent customer of a certain wholesaler. Every time he needed merchandise to sell he would make it his business to go first to the storage facility of this large provider of goods. He would walk proudly throughout the warehouse pointing to various products and commanding that "I want a hundred skids of this and a gross of that and a ton of some of those over there" and the workers would scramble to fill his large orders and load his truck up with the goods he was purchasing. That's how it worked season after season and year after year.

Hard financial times began to overtake the merchant. He wanted very much to keep his fiscal failings as private as possible. Therefore he would stride confidently as was his custom onto the loading dock and go about in his usual manner of pointing and calling out for big orders until his truck was brimming. However, since his business had suffered so, he had no monies with which to pay the wholesale provider for everything now sitting in his truck. So he quietly approached the owner of the business and humbly admitted, "I have no means with which to pay now. Is it possible that you can extend me a little credit?"

The Dubno Maggid explained that so it is with us during these days when so much lies in the balance. We open our mouths with an almost a brazen familiarity, like a child who calls his father from school or camp and feels so at ease and comfortable to ask for whatever he needs, "Abba, I need new shoes! Abba I need a new suit! Abba, please send money!" The good father always is there and ready to fulfill his child's vital requests.

However, once the child realizes the extent to which goodness is being extended to him, his heart overflows with gratitude and humility and so he surrenders himself weeping quietly in an undertone as one absolutely dependent upon and completely subservient to a king. He begs for credit and admits privately that he is utterly destitute and in need of Tzedaka and Chessed- charity and kindness.

Avinu Malkeinu...Send us all that we need and more...may we find favor in the eyes of **Avinu Malkeinu!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).