



Published on www.bilvavi.net

[Home](#) > Tefillah - 133 Sanctuary

Tefillah - 133 Sanctuary

Taking Shelter Under Hashem's Wing

שמע קולינו ה' אלוקינו, חוס ורחם עלינו - We ask Hashem to hear our voice and have “pity and compassion” on us - “*chus v'racheim aleinu*”.

What does it mean that we ask Hashem especially for “חוס”, “pity”, and for רחמים, “compassion”?

It is not simply a prayer that Hashem should have compassion on us by answering our prayers, as it would seem to imply. Rather, חוס\pity means as it is written, “**בצל כנפיו, יחסון**” - “*In the shadow of Your wings, take shelter.*” [1] The word חוס (“chus”) means, to take shelter - under the One who is having compassion on us.

Compare this to the following scenario. If Reuven feels bad for Shimon, but Shimon lives in another city, he can feel sorry for him, but he can't take him under his wing and take care of his problems. But if Reuven takes Shimon into his house and takes care of him, that is the meaning of *chus*, to truly take pity on another - to take someone under your wing and let him be in your shelter.

So too, we are asking Hashem to have pity on us, to take us under His wing - as it is written, “*In the shadow of Your wings, take shelter.*” The fact that one has taken shelter is what can save him from his danger.

The word *racheim*, as the Maharal writes, comes from the word *rechem*, womb, hinting to the mercy of a mother upon her child. When a person needs compassion, he runs back to his source, to the *rechem* he came from - to his mother.

Thus, when we ask Hashem that He should have *chus*\pity and *rachamim*\compassion on us, we are asking Hashem that we be taken underneath His wing, and that we be taken pity upon, by Him - similar to how an infant turns to its mother when it senses danger.

The depth behind our prayer of **שמע קולינו, ה' אלוקינו, חוס ורחם עלינו** - “*Hear our voice, Hashem our G-d, take pity and compassion on us*” - is thus that we are beseeching Hashem to return to our original state, back to the “womb” - to return to a relationship of closeness with Hashem, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes, that one can talk to Hashem in prayer, “as a man talks to his friend”.

The simple meaning of our request here is that we are asking Hashem to take pity on us and take us into His shelter, and as the possuk says, “*Hashem is close to all those who call out to Him in truth.*” [2] But the deeper meaning is, that we are asking Hashem to return to the inner meaning of life, to yearn

for the real life - and that will be what saves us.

A child naturally
cries for his mother
and misses her,
and he wants to
keep feeling her
compassion on
him, which he
needs.

The Child Within You

The metaphor given to describe our relationship with Hashem is that of a child yearning for its mother, **כגמול עלי אמו**, "*Like a child on its mother's lap.*"

When a child is dependent on his mother, not only does he look to the mother to be fed and to be physically nourished, but the child as well turns to his mother for love, warmth and compassion. The child needs his mother for an emotional bond. In the ninth months of pregnancy, when the child is a fetus, the child forms a certain attachment to his mother, and gets used to the compassion of his mother.

After he is born, he is already attached to his mother, and he continues to turn to his mother for his needs, both physically and emotionally. A child naturally cries for his mother and misses her, and he wants to keep feeling her compassion on him, which he needs.

As a person gets older and more mature, he enters the outside world, and he goes to school, and then to *yeshiva*. What happens? He goes from the world of his childhood, which was a world of love and compassion, into the real world out there - a world that is at times unfriendly, uncaring, cold, and outright nasty.

The child begins to learn that this world is not such a nice place; he gets into fights, first with his siblings and then with peers, and he grows out of childish innocence, for he 'gets used' to the big tough world he has to deal with. He learns what it means to fight with others, and to be ignored and hurt by others - and what it means to ignore others in return.

A person, throughout life, often experiences how Yosef felt when his brothers hated him and then didn't talk to him, out of their enmity towards him.[\[3\]](#)

But even after we go through times that we get hurt from people in the world, we still retain our nature of a child, longing for warmth and love from others. We learn to live with a gnawing contradiction in ourselves: on one hand, we get used to the fact that we live in a cold environment, but at the same time, we cannot ignore our need for closeness and love from others.

We get hurt from others, yet we still crave a relationship of closeness with others, and we yearn for a feeling of warmth from others.

As time goes on, and we go through more rough times relating to other people in our life, we begin to lose touch with our inner child. As children, we would run to our mother as soon as there was a problem, but as we get older, we stop doing that. We get hurt from others and from surroundings, and we have no one to run to for relief. As adults, we may have with us an inner child that still longs for

love and warmth, but at the same time, we get burned by others' cruelty and insensitivity.

There is always a part in us that acts like a child, always wishing to run back to our parents' love when we get hurt by others. At the same time, we get used to the fact that real life involves getting hurt by others. We all get used to the contradiction, more or less. But if a person is a bit more sensitive, he will feel bothered by this inner contradiction going on in our life.

Life is designed in this way for a purpose. We start out in life with a child's innocence, a part in us that wants love and warmth from others; as life goes on and we go through more and more experiences, we realize that the world out there is not that nice to us, and there is a lesson we are supposed to learn from this.

It is because there are really two parts to us - there is a part in us that always wants love, and there is also a part in us that is ready to detach from others and be alone. We can have a healthy balance of these two parts - and then live life properly and correctly.

If a person has gotten hurt by other people many times in his life, as we all do, and he becomes too hardened from life as a result, he will come to feel that life on this world is nothing but darkness, a cold and uncaring place, telling himself, "That's life". His own emotions will become deadened as a result. This is the natural course that a person will take - he starts out life innocent and feeling loved, then he gets hurt, so many times, until he eventually gives up on ever getting his need for love and warmth.

But this is not how Hashem wants us to live life. Hashem doesn't want us to remain with the way we were born as children, nor does He want us to remain solely with our adult understanding towards life. Rather, the two parts in our life, the child aspect and the adult aspect, are meant to be fused together, as follows.

The Mature Outlook Towards Life

Understandably, the bruises we suffer from other people in our life are a difficult test, because it is impossible for us to suffocate our need for love and warmth, and we are living in a world in which the people are not supplying it to us.

But we are supposed to go through that stage in life and come to the following realization: Our need for love and warmth will indeed never come from anyone on this world.

The bruises we go through in life are the true test to our free will, to test us if we will just remain sheltered in our parents' love alone and not go beyond that - or if we will channel that instead to taking shelter under Hashem - "*In the shadow of Your wings, take shelter.*"

It is written in Tehillim, [and we say this after *Shacharis* during *Elul*, in the "*L'Dovid*" prayer], "*For my father and my mother have abandoned me.*"^[4] The deeper implication of this is that at some point in one's life, he has to come to feel, that his need for love and warmth will never be fully satisfied even by the fact that he had parents who loved him.

The entire love which our parents gave to us is meant to serve as a *moshol*, a parable, to a *nimshal*, the greater lesson - that just as a child longs for its mother's compassion, so must we long for Hashem and take shelter in Him.

In order to grasp this, we need a certain maturity. Even the non-spiritual aspect in us, our *nefesh habehaimis* - the animalistic level of soul which contains our base emotions - can understand the concept we are describing, as long as one has matured a little about life.

We do not mean to imply here that one has to become a cold person, with no need for warmth from others. Rather, what is meant here is that we must realize that the love we received from our parents was all a *moshol* - a parable - and we should not remain with the parable and miss the *nimshal*, the lesson of the parable.

We must understand the *nimshal* of the *moshol*, which is, that all this love we experienced is meant to lead us on the direction of feeling a need to take shelter - in Hashem.

The deep and mature understanding about life is that the more you feel how this world is a cold environment, the more you can be lead to truly feel that the only way for you to get your yearning for connection is in a relationship with Hashem.

We live in a cold world, where people act selfish to us and they are mostly self-absorbed, each person wrapped up in his own problems. It is a painful realization to the soul, to anyone who is a bit emotionally sensitive.[5]

When one realizes this, he can conclude that there is no one who can really pity us - no one but Hashem.

The Purpose of Why We Get Hurt

We see this apparent from the fact that most people have strife in their lives with others. Ever since the first day of Creation, when Kayin fought with Hevel his brother and killed him, the world has been this way. There are fights going on in families, between siblings, between people who used to be friends with each other, and even within the Torah world, there are disputes going on.

This is especially true in the current generation, which precedes the arrival of Moshiach, in which Chazal prophesied that it will be a generation in which people fight against the Torah scholars. People who were together in *yeshivah* for years ever since they were in kindergarten, who had seemed to be inseparable, are now in strife with each other. All of the disparity on this world is because we live in an *alma d'piruda*, a world of disparity [which began with the first sin].

This reality has both pros and cons to it. Strife in this world is a force of evil[6], but at the same time, we can use it constructively - when we use it to awaken in ourselves a need to look elsewhere from this world to find a place of true love and warmth. All the strife we see in the world can help us realize, that indeed, we cannot live on this cold world. We need to find a new world where we can escape to, a world of love and warmth, a world of "*In the shadow of Your wings, take shelter.*"

People are looking for love, warmth and closeness on this world, and sadly, they will not find it. There are a few people on this world who have a truly loving relationship with their parents and with their spouse. But most people do not have that, and therefore, most people on this world are very lonely.[7]

A person who is lonely might think he has lots of "friends", while in reality, none of these friends are real friends; they are not all like the friends of Iyov, and they are rather the opposite. No one can really know for sure who his real friends are; friends often talk about each other behind each other's backs. There is very little real love to be offered on this world.[8]

Most people are hardened from the setbacks with others in their life. The more a person is in touch with his soul, he is sensitive to the situation of this world, and he feels the painful reality we are describing - and his soul suffers from this. Most people have given up a long time ago on relationships, and their feelings have become deadened.

We must instead guard our inner child, the feeling of yearning for connection which we had when we were children, and yearn for *"In the shadow of your wings, take shelter."* We must indeed yearn for connection, but for a true connection, and it doesn't come from any person on This World.

Elul: Yearning For Hashem

The days of Elul are depicted as *"Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li"*, "I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me."^[9] In Elul we also say the verse, *"For my father and mother have abandoned me."* Elul is all about yearning for Hashem, to take shelter under His wing.

When we have this truthful yearning for connection and it is done in the right way, our soul will find its solace.

The Parable and The Lesson

Without yearnings for Hashem, a person remains satisfied with the fact that he was loved by his parents, and he never goes beyond that. He remains in the *moshol* of life and he never gets to the *nimshal*.

There are people who are very family-oriented; their attitude is that "My family is my whole life." Family is everything to them^[10]. Others think that life is all about having close friends. Either of these mentalities in life can lead a person away from the *nimshal* of life. He will remain in the '*moshol*' of life, never seeing the '*nimshal*'. (And when it comes to friendships, often, a person's friendships are anyways worthless and devoid of meaning).

The true lifestyle of a Jew's soul is to demand a **true** place to run away to, where he can feel **truly** loved and pitied. The more a person matures through life, the more he should realize and feel the truth about life: life on this world cannot supply us with the love and warmth we need.

Don't realize this because you heard about it. Realize it because you have come to that understanding about life from *within* yourself.

We need to realize the deep meaning of life. Life on this world must cause to realize that we cannot survive on This World and feel fulfilled, and therefore we have no choice but to seek somewhere else to live - another world than This World.

There are some people who feel emotionally fulfilled from their home situation, because they have perfect *shalom bayis* (marital peace), and they feel completely loved by their spouse. This seems like a wonderful situation, as if nothing could be better than it. Such a person must understand that having a wonderful home situation, while offering peace and bliss, is a situation that can make him become too complacent. He is likely to remain with the *moshol* of life and never get to the *nimshal*.

As for most people, who do not have a perfect domestic situation, we can realize from this that it's to show us that we cannot get our emotional needs met by family life, and we have no one else to turn to but Hashem.

Just as a child feels a yearning for his mother, so can our soul feel a yearning for Hashem; it is written, *"She [the soul] clings and is attached to You."* Yearning for Hashem is not something you know about; it's something that needs to be palpably felt.

The purpose of why we get so hurt in life from other people is essentially to come to this realization: that we need to channel our yearning for connection with people to yearning for a close relationship with Hashem.

Finding Your Inner Sanctuary

In our current generation, there is no peace anymore in the world, because of all the strife that is rampant in our times. Our soul has no choice but to seek a different world where it can dwell in - a world of love, warmth, and complete good.

All of this can be understood by even the non-spiritual of our soul, our *nefesh habehaimis*; for even our *nefesh habehaimis* seeks connection, therefore, it also wants to be close to Hashem, though not as much as our spiritual element of the soul seeks closeness with Hashem. Even more so, the spiritual element in our soul [the G-dly soul] seeks a spiritual world to dwell in.

If we reflect about the situation of this world, we can feel that This World is a miniature version of Hell. This world is full of people who engage in sin and impurity; we live in a world in which most people are not doing the will of Hashem. Our soul can feel very saddened at this.

Our very existence on this world, in this current generation, demands us to live in a different world. We can be on this world yet live an angelic kind of existence [at times], apart from how others live their life.[\[11\]](#)

The intention here does not mean that we should wish to ascend to Gan Eden as we live on this world. There are people who would like to do that, but that is impossible. Rather, we can live on this world, but only in the bodily sense; our soul can be connected to the spiritual even as our body is here on this earth.[\[12\]](#)

How many souls are so lonely on this world! How much pain people have on this world! Even our animalistic layers of our existence are crying out to seek another place to live than this world. The little bit of spirituality that each person has is certainly demanding in us that we live in a different world than this one; the reality of this cold world we live on is too painful of a reality to bear. How pitiful is a person who remains that way his whole life and never escapes the painful reality of life on this world! It is impossible if he were to try to survive that way.

There is only one true piece of advice, for anyone who identifies with this pain: We must find a new kind of life, a life of *"Hear our voice, Hashem our G-d, have pity and compassion on us."* We must reveal an inner kind of life on this world; our soul needs to return to its inner source, to the depth of the Torah, to be near Hashem and with Him, to *"cling and be attached to You."*

Any Jewish soul on this world is living either one kind of life or another: either one is suffering terribly from loneliness on this world, because he lacks a deep connection with Hashem[\[13\]](#) - or he has already run away from the life of this world and he has taken shelter with Hashem and the inner depth of Torah.

In the situation of the world we live in today, without taking shelter in Hashem, a person's feelings towards spirituality are certainly deadened. How sad is it if a person remains in the cold life of this world and he never frees himself from it.

The more we go through disappointments from people on this world, the more we can realize how much we need to demand to live in a different world than this one; to live in an inner world.

In Conclusion

The time of Elul is a special opportunity for us to gain this perspective. A person who indeed acquires this matter lives in a world of light, a Gan Eden on this world.

It doesn't mean for a person to run away from his troubles and put himself out of his misery. It means to run away from this world for a deeper purpose, and discover a whole new meaning to life.

There is so much impurity on this world - and that, itself, is why it is so crucial to escape it, and to find somewhere else to live.

May we merit to recognize the depth of the place and time we are in right now, to realize the situation and how much we need to run away from it, to run away to Hashem and take shelter underneath Him. In that way, we will find the total attachment of Hashem, as it is written, "*And you shall cling to Hashem your G-d.*"[\[14\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) Tehillim 36:8

[\[2\]](#) Tehillim 145:8

[\[3\]](#) Beraishis 37:4 and 37:18

[\[4\]](#) Tehillim 27:10

[\[5\]](#) See ***Fixing Your Wind_015_Self-Absorption***

[\[6\]](#) See ***Fixing Your Water_020_The Desire For Competition***; see also ***Tefillah_0170_Peace***

[\[7\]](#) See ***Tefillah_0130_The Cure To Loneliness***

[\[8\]](#) See ***Fixing Your Water_018_The Desire To Be Loved***; see also ***Getting To Know Your Self***, Part I, chapter five

[\[9\]](#) Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs) 6:4

[\[10\]](#) For more on this point, see ***Tefillah #0124 - The Only Lasting Connection***

[\[11\]](#) A statement of the Chazon Ish in *Igros Chazon Ish*, Vol. I

[\[12\]](#) See ***Tefillah #0128- Body On Earth, Mind In Heaven.***

[\[13\]](#) See ***Tefillah #0131 - The Cure To Loneliness***

[14] Similar context of this shiur is explained in **Tefillah #0102 - When You Feel Unloved** and **Tefillah #0123 - The Only Lasting Connection**, and **Fixing Your Water #018 - The Desire To Be Loved**

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-133-sanctuary>