

posuk in *Mishlei* (Proverbs 16:7) "ברצות ה' דרכי איש גם" (*Birtzos Hashem darkei ish gam oivov yashlim eto*)—When Hashem favors man's ways, even his enemies will make peace with him." The word "*retzos*" (favors) has the *gematriah* (numerical equivalent) of 696, meaning that Hashem favors a man's ways when he goes in Hashem's way during all the 696 hours of Elul. Then, even the enemies will make peace with him.

Our Sages explain in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Terumos 8:3*), this *posuk* is speaking about the *yetzer hora*—the enemy of man. Through *teshuvah* we have the power to change all. Man has the power to change *aveiros* (sins) to *zechuyos* (merits), and suffering to joy.

The students of R Yisroel Salanter said that on the Shabbos when they would *bentsch Rosh Chodesh Elul* (bless the New Moon), and the *shliach tzibbur* would call out *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, R' Yisroel's entire being began to tremble. The assemblage could sense the difference between *tefillas mussaf* and the earlier *tefillas shacharis*, for *mussaf* had already been included in the prayers of Elul.

One Request

With the approach of the *Yomim Noraim*, each person asks himself: In which *avodah* should I direct my efforts during these “holy days”? Certainly, the essence of our *teshuvah* and our success during the *Yomim Noraim* is proper *avodah*—prayer, repentance, and good deeds.

Concerning *tefillah*, we are sometimes unsure exactly how to *daven*, when to *daven*, and what special *tefillos* to say. One of the greatest questions is, “What should I be requesting?”

People often ask: “What should I have in mind during my *tefillah*? Each of us has his own list: good health, *parnossoh*, children, *shidduchim*. We try to include as many things as possible, for we know the singular *zechus* a person has during the time when it says “והמלך בא בשדה”—and the king enters the field.” At this propitious time, the Ribono Shel Olam is waiting for our *tefillos*. The Gates of *Tefillah* are wide open, even more than during the rest of the year.

Do we really, in truth, know what we should be *mispallel* for now?

sary. As Chazal tell us, "אלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו אין יכול לו"—if Hashem does not help the individual, he will not be able to overcome his evil inclination." (*Kiddushin* 30.)

During *tefillah* we ask for Hashem's assistance in understanding what are our personal needs, the needs of our family, and the needs of Klal Yisroel. Therefore we ask: אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש. We are asking Hashem to help us to direct our *tefillos* properly.

The *Divrei Chaim* was once asked by a *chossid*: "Please tell me, what does the Rebbe do before *davening*?" The *Divrei Chaim* replied: "I *daven* that I be able to pray properly."