

Vaetchanan

The Or Hachayim tells us that there are four conditions for our prayer to be accepted:

- We need to pray in a manner similar to a poor man who knocks on a door in order to obtain some alms or some food as a hand-out, as we have been taught in Proverbs 18:23

the poor man speaks beseechingly

- the prayer must be addressed to the source of Mercy, i.e. God Himself in His capacity as the attribute of Mercy
- It must be offered at a time when prayers are accepted, as we know from Psalms 69:14

May my prayer to you come at a favorable moment

- The prayer must be specific, incapable of being interpreted wrongly

Moses says that he said: וְאֶתְחַנֵּן I besought, I entreated, I implored. I pleaded. He did not say וְאֶתְפַּלֵּל, I prayed.

The Hebrew word וְאֶתְחַנֵּן has the gematria 515. The Hebrew word תְּפִלָּה prayer, also has the gematria 515. They are both kinds of prayer. תְּפִלָּה is a prayer to grant a request that is deserved. תְּחִינָה is a prayer to grant a request that is not necessarily deserved. It is a request to grant pardon or concession as from the root חָנַן.

Here, for the first time in his life, Moses, the most humble of all men, asked for something for himself. As he was about to ask, he reflected about what merit he had that he might advance on his own behalf in justification of his request. He could find none. When it came to his own merit, Moses saw himself as a beggar and he spoke to God accordingly.

Moses says that he said: וְאֶתְחַנֵּן I besought, I entreated, I supplicated myself before God. I asked for a pardon. I sought a concession. So he complied with the first of the four conditions for a successful prayer.

In the shemoneh esrah, we say

Hear our voice Hashem our God	שמע קולנו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
take pity on us and be compassionate to us	חַוּם וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ
and accept with compassion and favor	וְקַבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרַצוֹן
our prayer	אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ
for a God who hears	כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ
prayers and supplications	תְּפִלּוֹת וְתַחֲנוּנִים
are You.	אַתָּה

In the tachanun we say

Compassionate and Gracious One	רַחֵם וְחַנוּן
I have sinned	חָטָאתִי
before You.	לְפָנֶיךָ
Hashem,	יְהוָה
who is full of compassion,	מְלֵא רַחֲמִים
be compassionate to me	רַחֵם עָלַי
and receive	וְקַבַּל
my supplications.	תַּחֲנוּנָי

When he said אֵל יְהוָה he complied with the second condition. He addressed his prayer to the compassionate dimension of God.

When he said בְּעֵת הַהוּא at that time, the time was right after God helped the Israelites to defeat Sichon and Og. When their lands had been conquered, this was an appropriate time, for God was with them.

When he said the paragraphs following לְאָמֹר, saying, he complied with the fourth condition for a prayer to be accepted. He said אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה, my Master, Hashem. Why does he use two names? אֲדֹנָי, rabbi Hirsch says, is that dimension of God's will that finds us worthy to be His servant and allows us to be the instrument for the accomplishment of His Will on earth. When we relate to God as אֲדֹנָי, my Master, we express our complete readiness for obedience, to do everything that God wishes.

יהוה, Hashem's name voweled as elokim, is God's love showing itself as justice. By relating to God as אֱהוִה, Moses shows complete conviction that also in judging and possibly denying his request, God is still in his eyes, the God of Love.

Rabbi Hirsch tells us that

By addressing Him by both names, Moses declares beforehand

how without discontent he will not complain if God's decision finds it right to deny him his last and warmest wish.

Moses continues,

Lord God, You have begun to give your servant an insight into your greatness and your mighty hand, for what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to your works and according to your might?

Moses precedes his request by praise of God. You have begun to show your *greatness*, הַגְּדוֹלָה, your strong hand which is *mighty*, הַגְּבוּרָה, for what power is there that can perform according to Your deeds, which are *awesome*, הַנִּיזָּרָא.

גְּדוֹלָתְךָ, Your greatness. God's greatness is the creative forming power educating mankind to His purposes. יָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה, your mighty hand. God's mighty hand is the power that overthrows all opposing forces. This is the power that can alter nature.

Moses told God,

You have begun to show me Your mighty hand. Even if a mortal king has great power to fight against his enemies, he himself does not go to wage battle. The king prepares weapons and devises a strategy, and then sends his soldiers into battle. One man, even if he is a mighty king, cannot wage war by himself. But You, God, have a mighty hand. You Yourself do battle.

Moses continued,

Who in heaven and earth can do Your deeds and who has Your strength? You are not like a mortal king. If a person makes a request of a mortal king and the king does not want to do it, it is possible that another person will. But this is not true of You. If You do not do something, no one else in heaven and earth can do it.

Then Moses began to plead,

Lord of the universe, when You began to show me Your servant the war of Sichon and Og, who were one of the seven nations, You told me,

Today begin to inherit the land.

You also told me,

Now I will begin to impose the dread of you on the nations.

So show me God, the battle of the thirty one kings. You said that You had begun to impose the terror of the Israelites on these nations. Just as I participated and helped in the war against Og and Sichon, I also want to participate in the remaining wars to conquer the land.

And Moses continued to plead.

יְהוָה יְהוָה! Please, God, Let me cross the Jordan. Let me see the good land across the Jordan, the good mountain and the Lebanon.

Our sages teach us that it is important to pray to God in a time of trouble. The reason that prayer is so important is that when we pray to God with all our heart, we show that we believe that no matter what happens to us, whether good or bad, it does come from God. We recognize that God is the master of all. We turn in prayer to God knowing full well that no one other than God can help us. With praying, we show that we believe that God is one and His name one.

Today, God, your people are in trouble. Today, God, your good land, the land of Israel, is in trouble. Do you remember God, your good land, your land that flows with milk and honey. Today remember your people. Would you look into them, and see how many are doing as best possible living their lives as lives of Torah, just as you commanded. And those of your people that are not, never had the opportunity for a Torah education. They do not know better. They too are doing the best they can.

Today, God, your good land is in trouble. The enemy, Amalek, in the guise of today's Palestinians are killing your people, one by one. Their children martyr themselves by being suicide bombers. And they do this in what think is Your name. And the rest of the nations cheer them on. Lord, Doesn't this anger you?

Dear God, when will your people see your mighty hand? For your hand is the only hand that can set things right. Dear God, the time is right. Have you noticed that now is the greatest Ba'al Tshuvah movement in Yiddishkeit

than there has ever been. Do you know how difficult it is to turn their personal world inside out upside down as the Ba'al Tshuvah are doing.

You told us through our sages that one of the purposes of our exile is so that righteous converts may become part of your people. And today, there are more righteous converts who have joined your people than ever before.

Dear God, now is the time. Please act now. We cannot wait any longer. **וְאֵתְּנֵנּוּ**. We need machiach now.