

AVINU MALKEINU:

No prayer so thoroughly captures the Jewish people's dual relationship with G-d as *Avinu Malkeinu*, "Our Father, Our King."

The formula of the prayer, which has been expanded throughout the centuries to include a total of 44 verses, is based on the prayer that Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest Talmudic sages, recited during a drought.

After the community's prayers had brought no relief, Rabbi Akiva went forward and called out to G-d, "Our Father, Our King, we have no king but You. Our Father, Our King, for Your sake have mercy upon us!" The rains immediately began to fall.

By addressing G-d as both our father and our king, we are directing our prayers through two different avenues.

From a father, one expects mercy, love and forgiveness. A father looks at his child and sees only that child, that special individual, his own flesh and blood, and instinctively feels mercy for the child. Certainly we wish to address our petitions to G-d's aspect of mercy on the Day of Judgement.

On the other hand, a King controls the fate of his subjects. His rule is with judgement and justice, and we must also address our prayers to this aspect of G-d during Rosh Hashanah and the ten days that follow (through Yom Kippur). After all, this is the time that G-d sits with His books of judgement open before Him.

By referring to G-d as our King, we are reminding ourselves that while He loves us as a father, we must also be in awe of His greatness.

As mentioned, there are now 44 petitions in the full *Avinu Malkeinu* prayer. The majority of the verses are recited silently. Verses 15-24 and the final verse, however, are generally said out loud and responsively, with the final verse in song. As we look at those verses, notice also that all of the prayers are written in the plural.

LEADER--Recite Verses 15-24 of Avinu Malkeinu aloud (responsively) and together. If there is time, have different participants reflect on what the verses mean to them. The final verse should be sung.

Our Father, Our King, return us to You in complete repentance.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ הַחֲזִירְנוּ בַתְּשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ.

Our Father, Our King, send a complete recovery to the sick of Your people.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ שְׁלַח הַפִּנְיָה שְׁלֵמָה לְחֹלֵי עַמְךָ.

Our Father, Our King, tear up the evil decree of our judgement.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ קָרַע רוּעַ גְּזֵר דֵינֵנוּ.

Our Father, Our King, remember us in a positive memory before You.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ זְכַרְנוּ בְּזִכְרוֹן טוֹב לְפָנֶיךָ.

Our Father, Our King, inscribe us in the book of good life.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים טוֹבִים.

Our Father, Our King, inscribe us in the book of redemption and salvation.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר גְּאֻלָּה וְיִשׁוּעָה.

Our Father, Our King, inscribe us in the book of sustenance and support.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר פֶּרֶןסָה וְכִלְכָּלָה.

Our Father, Our King, inscribe us in the book of mercy.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר זְכוּיוֹת.

Our Father, Our King, inscribe us in the book of forgiveness and pardon.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר סְלִיחָה וּמְחִילָה.

Our Father, Our King, be gracious with us and answer us, even though we have no worthy deeds, do with us righteousness and goodness and save us.

אָבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ חַנּוּן וְעַנּוּן כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים
עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.