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Av 14, 5779  
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Parashat Va'etchanan- Shabbat Nachamu  
Rabbi Mansour

### **Parashat Va'etchanan - A Person Can Pray for Anything**

Moshe tells Benei Yisrael in Parashat Va'etchanan, "For who is a great nation who has a god close to it, like Hashem, our God, is whenever we call unto Him?" (4:7). In its plain sense, this verse refers to God's constant accessibility, the fact that we can turn to Him in prayer at any time. Nobody should ever think that God has no interest in listening to his prayers except on the High Holidays, or only in the synagogue on Shabbat. The door to God's office is always open, "whenever we call unto Him." At any time, three hundred and sixty-five days throughout the year, a person can pray. "Behold, He neither sleeps nor slumbers, the Guardian of Israel." Unlike mortal leaders, with whom one must first schedule an appointment – and even then is not necessarily guaranteed audience with them – God is available to us at any time, all year round.

But this verse lends itself to an additional interpretation, as well. It perhaps establishes that just as there is no restriction on when we can turn to God, so is there no restriction on the kind of requests one may bring to God. It is readily obvious that we can and must pray to God on behalf of those who are gravely ill, for somebody who lost his job and is in dire need of a source of livelihood, or for a person who is searching for a Shidduch (mate). These are, of course, very serious matters for which one should pray to the Almighty. But can one "inconvenience" God for lesser concerns? Is it proper for a person to pray as he drives to the city that he finds a parking spot, or that his child thinks clearly during his exam that day?

Moshe therefore tells us that God is close to us "whenever we call unto Him." Whether we pray to Him regarding very critical matters or less critical matters, He listens. There is no such thing as "inconveniencing" the Almighty. To the contrary, one ought to accustom himself to speak to God on a regular basis, to bring to Him even simple requests. When a person adds the words "Be'ezrat Hashem" ("with God's help") or "Im Yirtzeh Hashem" ("if Hashem wills it") when he speaks of his plans, he expresses his awareness of God's ultimate control over his life. When a person remarks, "I am going shopping this afternoon, God willing," or, "With God's help I'll be in the city later today," he is in effect saying that he cannot make it to the store or the city without God's assistance. Any one of a wide range of factors can prevent a person from reaching the store or getting into the city; a believing Jew must recall that even these seemingly trivial matters are in God's hands, and therefore even these concerns warrant a prayer. "For who is a great nation who has a god close to it, like Hashem, our God, is whenever we call unto Him?" Whatever the issue is, no matter how big or how small, we have unlimited access to God's compassion. A Jew can pray for anything, and he can be fully confident that God is listening.