**The Off-Shoot of David**

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| Cause the off-shoot of David, Your servant, to blossom quickly.Let his light rise through your salvation.For we await your salvation every day.Blessed are You, Adonai, who causes the light of salvation to blossom. | אֶת צֶמַח דָּוִד עַבְדְּךָ מְהֵרָה תַצְמִיחַ. וְקַרְנו תָּרוּם בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ. כִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קִוִּינוּ כָּל הַיּום. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מַצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן יְשׁוּעָה:  |

In our study of this prayer, we shall focus on some of the important Hebrew words and see how our prayers are like sound-bites from the Bible.

Specifically we will focus on two words "*tzemach*" and "*keren*."

The word " צֶמַח" comes from the word for "plant." We have translated it "off-shoot" because it usually refers to something that sprouts from another plant.

The word is an echo of Isaiah 11:1:

"A shoot (צֶמַח) shall sprout out of the stump of Jesse [David's father] a twig shall sprout from its roots."

* Why would Isaiah refer to a "shoot sprouting out of the stump of Jesse"?
* What does a stump symbolize? How is Jesse like a stump? Who is the "shoot?"
* Why do you think Isaiah uses the imagery of plants to imagine the restoration of David's line of kings?

Another verse which uses this root is Jeremiah 33:15. The language of this verse is found quite precisely in the Shemoneh Esrei.

"In those days and at that time I will cause to sprout [אַצְמִיחַ] for David a righteous sprout [צֶמַח]."

The second interesting word in this prayer is קֶרֶן or וְקַרְנו. This word can mean either "horn" as in the horns on an animal. It could also mean "light." When Moses comes down from Mt. Sinai his face is said to have "shined." But this is where the confusion came in that Jews have horns—some interpreters thought it meant that Moses had grown horns and that is where the myth came that Jews had horns!

The word is combined with אַצְמִיחַ—cause a sprout to grow—in Ezekiel 29:21:

"On that day I will cause a horn to sprout [אַצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן ] for the House of Israel, and I will grant you opening of the mouth[[1]](#footnote-1) among them. And they shall know that I am the Lord."

* What does an animal's horn symbolize?
* When in Judaism do we use an animal's horn?
* What does it mean to "cause a horn to sprout"?
* What words are found in the prayer but not in these verses?
1. This means that God will cause the other nations to listen to what Israel has to say. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)