

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



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PURIM

תשע"ח

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Pearls of Amen and Tefillah in Megillas Esther

One Who Davens for His Friend is Answered First

"לך כנוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן וצומו עלי...גם אני ונערותי אצום כן" (ד טז)

Harav Yitzchak Eliyahu Landau, the Maggid of Vilna, explains: Esther told Mordechai: "If all the Jews will fast for me and daven for me, and "I will likewise fast" and daven for them, then surely we will also see salvation quickly, as the Gemara says (*Bava Kama* 92a): "Anyone who asks for mercy for his friend and he needs the same thing, he is answered first."

Kiflayim Letushiah

One Who Mentions Geulah Adjacent to Shemoneh Esrei Is Not Harmed All Day

"ובבקר אמר למלך ויתלו את מרדכי עליו" (ה יד)

"He thought that at the time of *Krias Shema* he would hang Mordechai." (*Yalkut Shimoni, Esther* 1057)

Harav Yehonasan Eibshitz explained:

Haman was afraid that Mordechai would have time to recite *Krias Shema* and to say the *brachah* of *Ga'al Yisrael* right before *Shemoneh Esrei*, at the *neitz*, at sunrise and thus he would not be able to harm him. As the Gemara says (*Brachos* 9b), that "anyone who is *somech geulah* to *tefillah* [at sunrise (*Tosafos* *ibid* beginning with "kol")]] is not harmed that entire day." Therefore, he wanted to rise early and kill Mordechai before he could recite *Krias Shema*.

Ye'eros Devash, Vol. I, Drush 17

Some added that that is why we ask each morning: "And may we find today **and every day** favor and *chesed* and mercy..." Why must we ask "and every day"? Do we not ask for this each morning anew? Yet we are davening against those harmful forces that seek to harm us the next day, even before we have time to daven this *tefillah*.

Orach Zu Torah, Megillas Esther, p. 238

Razei Emunim

Allusions to Amen in Megillas Esther

Amen in the Days of Mordechai and Esther

"ויהי אמן את הדסה היא אסתר בת דדו כי אין לה אב ואם" (ב ז)

The *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 124 7) says: "And he should teach his young sons to answer amen, because as soon as the baby replies amen he has a share in the World to Come," as the Gemara states in *Sanhedrin* (110b): "From when does a child merit the World to Come? Rabi Meir says: from when he says amen."

Harav Eliyahu Hakohein of Izmir, author of *Shevet Mussar*, explains this *passuk*: Because Esther, who is Hadassah, "had no father or mother" to teach her to answer amen, which would help her merit Olam Haba, therefore "Vayehi omen es Hadassah" – Mordechai made sure to teach her from a young age to reply amen.

Minchas Eliyahu, Chapter 32

It is possible that as a result "And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her" (*passuk* 15), because answering amen causes one to find favor in the eyes of others. The early sages derived this from the acronym of the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 18:3): "*Im na matzasi chein be'einecha*, if I please find favor in your eyes", is "amen."

Furthermore, being strict about answering amen, alluded to in this *passuk*, was a merit for Yisrael to be redeemed in the days of Mordechai and Esther. *Chazal* alluded to this by saying (*Tikkunei Zohar* 40 1): "Anyone who answers amen with all his might, his decree is torn up for **seventy years**" – an allusion to the seventy years of exile after the destruction of the first Bais Hamikdash – the period of Mordechai and Esther – who were redeemed in the merit of answering amen.

Ray A.A. Knopfler, Kovetz Hama'or 69, 6

A "Chavush" Cannot Break Free Nor Can He Free His Nation

"כלילה ההוא נדדה שנת המלך" (ו א)

In this *passuk*, the miraculous salvation of Mordechai from the hands of Haman begins to unfold. We have to understand why this incident was necessary. Would it not have been enough for Esther to relate to Achashveirosh that Haman wanted to destroy her nation as sufficient grounds to hang Haman, as it says (8:7): "And they hung him on the tree **because he tried to harm the Jews**"?

Harav Yehonasan Eibshitz explained:

The salvation of Am Yisrael stemmed from the power of Mordechai's *tefillah* (see *Megillah* 14a), but every time the sword of Haman was hanging over his head, Mordechai could not work on their behalf, because "a prisoner cannot release himself from prison" (*Brachos* 5b). As long as the *middas hadin* was in effect over him, he could not do anything for others. Therefore, HaKadosh Baruch Hu preceded his personal salvation, and after he was no longer considered a "chavush," a prisoner, he was able to daven and save Klal Yisrael.

This helps us understand why Mordechai returned to his sackcloth and fasting right after he was saved from Haman (see *Rashi* in *passuk* 12). He knew that specifically after he was saved, his *tefillah* for his nation was likely to be accepted.

The *Alshich* used this concept in order to explain the reason that Esther preceded her request for herself to her request for her nation, as it says (7:3): "*Tinasen nafshi be'sheilasi – v'ami bevakashasi*." She knew that in order for her *tefillah* for her nation to be accepted she needed to first extract herself from the status of "chavush" and only then could she ask for others.

Alshich, Esther 7:5; Ye'eros Devash, Vol. II, drush 9

"Yesod Veshoreish Ha'avodah"

Monday, 18 Adar, is the *yahrtzeit* of Harav Alexander Ziskind of Horodna, zy"ta, the author of *Yesod Veshoreish H'avodah*. In his renowned *sefer*, he expounds on the praise and virtue of answering amen with *kavanah*. He writes regarding reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*:

"*Birchos Hashachar*, from Hanosen Lasechvi Binah until Hagomel Chassadim, should be recited in shul with the rest of davening so that others can answer amen after the brachos, because how great is the brachah when there is amen answered after it, as the holy Zohar writes (*Eikev* 271 1)...therefore it is worthy for a person to take care to recite his brachos as much as possible before others, so that they can reply amen after the brachah."

Birchos Hashachar. Aloud, with kavanah, bechavrusa!



A Compilation of Thoughts on the Virtues of Tefillah on Purim

The Tefillah of Mordechai – In Those Days and in Our Times

In those days, and in our times, the *avodah* of *tefillah* was and remains an integral part of the day of Purim. In *Megillas Esther*, as in many *Midrashim* that were written on it, *tefillah* is a recurring theme, linking between the miracles that were performed for Am Yisrael at that time. Mordechai Hatzaddik is called in the Gemara (*Megillah* 12b): “Ben Yair” – a son who illuminated the eyes of Yisrael with his prayers; “Ben Shimi” – a son whose *tefillah* Hashem heard (*shama*), “Ben Kish” – who “*hekish*”, knocked at the gates of Mercy and they were opened for him.”

The *Midrash* also describes (*Esther Rabbah* 7 13): “At that time [when the decree of Haman was cast], Eliyahu ran in panic...and said to Moshe...what will you answer about this trouble...Moshe said to him, is there a good person in that generation? He told him, there is and his name is Mordechai. He told him, go and inform him so that he will stand up there in *tefillah*, and I will do so here, and we will ask for mercy for them before HaKadosh Baruch Hu.”

From then to this day, the *segulah* of *tefillah* on Purim is well known. *Tzaddikim* and *Chassidim* recognized its virtues and effected great *yeshuos* in the merit of *tefillah*. In this segment, we have compiled various thoughts from the words of our sages about *tefillah* on Purim, and may this serve as a *hisorerus* and may Hashem fulfill all our requests for the good.

To Rise Early

In the ancient *sefer Noheg Katzon Yosef* (*Purim* 8), the author writes that in Frankfurt it was customary to rise early on Purim in order to finish the *sefer Tehillim* of that day before *neitz hachamah*, sunrise. He writes (also cited in *Elyah Rabbah*, *Orach Chaim* 664 3) that Purim is one of the five days that one rises early to daven. [These days are alluded to in the *passuk* “*Vayashkem Avraham baboker*” (*Bereishis* 19:27) – and the letters of the word Avraham make up an acronym of the final letters of the words: Hoshana, Tisha B’Av, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Purim.]

The *sefer Segulos Yisrael* (80 4) says: “I received from a *gadol*, z”l, that it is a *segulah* on Purim to rise early and to daven extensively and plead before Hashem on any subject, whether for children, health and *parnassah*, and for other things, and for all one’s relatives, because that day is a most auspicious time, and all the worlds are in a state of joy and good will...That was accepted from the great *tzaddikim zy”a*...”

What Is Your Request and It Will Be Granted

The Chassidic giants have written that *tefillah* on Purim has a special value and it is in the power of each person to effect tremendous *yeshuos* through it. They cite the *Yerushalmi* (*Megillah* 1 4): “One is not strict about the *mitzvah* of Purim [and does not examine whether the one asking is truly needy or not], rather anyone who sticks his hand out to take, one gives to him.” They explain that HaKadosh Baruch Hu *kaviyachol* fulfills the *mitzvah* of *Matanos L’Evyonim* on Purim, and as it is ruled that “anyone who opens his hand one gives to him,” so too, Hashem answers anyone who asks, on whatever matter. (*Chiddushei Hari”m Al HaTorah*, *Inyanai Purim*; *Kovetz Tiferes Yisrael* 13, p. 5)

The *Shem MiShmuel* of Sochatchov (*Shemos*, *Maamarei Purim* p. 196) explained: Each year

on Purim, the impression of the miracle that happened in the days of Mordechai and Esther rises up again, and then it is in the hand of each Jew to ask from HaKadosh Baruch Hu for anything.

Harav Yitzchak Eizik of Komarna writes in *sefer Nidvas Pi* (*Mosar Shekalim*): “We have been taught that on the days of Purim all the *tefillas* of Yisrael rise to the highest place, unimpeded; I received this in a whisper and I became a “*holech rachil*”, a gossipmonger, and revealed this to everyone out of *ahavas Yisrael*.”

Harav Yitzchak Zev of Brisk cites the *Rambam* in the listing of the *mitzvos* in *Sefer Hamitzvos*: “And they instructed to read the *megillah* in its time in order to remind the praise of HaKadosh Baruch Hu and the miracles that were done for us, and that He heard our pleas, in order so that we should bless and praise Him and in order to inform the coming generations that the Torah’s promise (*Devarim* 4:8): ‘*Umi goy gadol asher lo Elokim kerovim eilav k’Hashem Elokeinu bechol keraeinu Eilav*,’ is true.

The Brisker Rav explains that this is what the poet was alluding to in *Shoshanas Yaakov*: “*Teshuasam hayisa lanetzach vesikvasam bechol dor vador, lehodia shekol kovecha lo yevoshu velo yikolmu lanetzach kol hachosim bach*.” We see that the miracle of Purim informs the coming generations that those who hope and daven to Hashem, their *tefillas* will be heard. (*Peninei Rabbeinu Hagri”z*, p. 84)

Daven With All of One’s Heart

The *Shem MiShmuel* (*ibid*) added a stipulation for this *tefillah*: just like in the days of Mordechai and Esther, Am Yisrael davened with all their hearts, so too, in our time, if the recital will not be “lip service” but with deep and energetic desire, then the *tefillah* will bear fruit.

The *Nesivos Shalom* of Slonim cites the words of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 69:14): “*V’ani tefilasi lecha Hashem eis ratzon...aneini b’emes yishecha*.” During an *eis ratzon* like the day of Purim, when Hashem says to every Jew: “What is your request and it will be granted,” then the Jew needs to ask: “*Aneini b’emes yishecha*” because at an auspicious time such as this we need to know what to ask for—not trivial matters, but rather for a **real salvation**. (*Nesivos Shalom* p. 78)

Yeshuah Out of Joy

In the *Vitri Machzor* (465, beginning with “*Leif*”) he writes in rhyme: “*Purim shekol adam ma’arich beseudas, unim haShamayim yemalu she’eilaso* (Purim when everyone prolongs their meal, then from Above his requests will be fulfilled).” The *sefer Divrei Shmuel* by Harav Shmuel of Slonim (p. 130 2) brings a story from Rav Naftali Hagadol. The king once sent a message to Rav Naftali to pray for him on a matter of great urgency. It was on Purim, and the emissaries saw that Rav Naftali was davening as he ate and drank and rejoiced, and they wondered about this unusual practice.

After he saw salvation, the king said to Rav Naftali, I am sure that my salvation came in the merit of your prayers, but I am surprised that you ate and drank while I was in trouble. Replied Rav Naftali: That is the custom of the special *tefillah* on this day. We eat and drink and rejoice in the *mitzvos* of Hashem, and just like we do His will, so, too, He does our will and fulfills our requests.

The Tefillah That Cut Down the Despot

Friday, 12 Adar 5713/1953. There was nothing unusual that foretold that on that nondescript winter day, twenty nine years of terror and authoritarianism under Stalin, *ym”s*, would come to an end with the sudden death of the despot.

Stalin himself was at the height of a wave of persecution against the Jews of the Soviet Union, a crusade that he had begun upon coming to power, and which intensified as the years passed, until it reached a peak in Shevat of 5713, with the renowned blood libel known as the “Doctors’ Trial”. Then, thirteen Jewish doctors were sentenced to death for ostensibly lying about a plot to poison senior regime officials.

At the time, the government media outlets, under direct order of Stalin, conducted widespread propaganda against the Soviet Union’s Jews, which contained vicious and untrue information. As the result of this propaganda, every Jew became suspected of treason, and from there to his exile for a “reeducation” in one of the dozens of gulags—brutal labor camps scattered all over the country—was just a short trip.

Those labor camps were defined by some—and rightly so—as death camps in every sense. Most of them were constructed in areas with freezing temperatures that sometimes dipped to 60 degrees below zero. Combined with harsh working conditions, scant clothing and meager rations, it was almost impossible to live there. Few returned in a healthy state, physically or emotionally.

On that Friday, Harav Yitzchak Zilber, z”l, who later became known for his role in teaching Torah to the Jews of the Soviet Union, was imprisoned along with hundreds of other Jews in one of those horrific gulags. The situation was dire and depressing, but Reb Yitzchak tried to lift the spirits of those around him. Dozens of Torah observant Jews cleaved to him and thirsted for every word that he said – his *divrei Torah* and words of *chizuk* that he constantly emitted were delivered in his pleasant, captivating demeanor.

The terrible news about the persecution of Jews was becoming worse, and that added fuel to the fire of fear that already burned in the hearts of the Jewish prisoners. When Reb Yitzchak noticed the dejected spirits of his fellow Jews, he had an idea. He suggested that they employ the eternal tool as their forbears had done, and should stand together and daven to Hashem to save them, with the hope that the *tefillah* would raise their spirits and bear fruit. Indeed, their tearful prayer was effective in somewhat lifting the spirits of the Jewish prisoners. Their hearts warmed and the hope pulsed once again through their veins.

On Sunday, which was Purim, dozens of Jews gathered with Rav Yitzchak waiting to hear what he had to say: “Rav Yitzchak,” they said to him, “It is Purim today! But while our forbears saw salvation on this day, we are still in the darkness of our troubles. Please, there is no one but you who can offer us some encouragement...”

This time, as well, Rav Yitzchak tried to encourage them and give them strength. He related from memory the story of *Megillas*

Esther, and vividly described the remarkable miracles that occurred to Am Yisrael during the times of the *Megillah*. Rav Yitzchak concluded his words with a cry from the depths of his heart: “Dear brothers, let us stand and daven that just like Hashem performed miracles for our forbears and saved them from Haman, so, too, He should perform miracles for us and save us from the “*Hamans*” that rise each day to destroy us.”

The call did not fall on deaf ears. The broken hearts of the Jewish prisoners opened easily and once again, the sound of *tefillah* resounded in the camp, the *tefillah* of broken Jews under the oppression of such a brutal regime.

Only one of those Jews did not join the emotional *tefillah*. His name was Eizik, one of the older prisoners. Until his incarceration, he had served in a senior position and he had a hard time bearing the humiliation that was part and parcel of camp life.

When Eizik heard Rav Yitzchak encouraging his friends and davening with them, he could not keep quiet any longer. He burst out angrily and said: “What do you have to daven for?! Isn’t Stalin the all-powerful ruler? If he has decided to destroy us, who can stand up against him?”

Rav Yitzchak tried to calm Eizik down, explaining that if we were saved from Haman *bechasdei Shamayim*, then surely we can also be saved from the evil Stalin. But the broken Eizik refused to listen. “Who is Haman next to the great Stalin?” he argued, and hurried to disappear into his hut. Rav Yitzchak and the Jews around him nodded sympathetically towards Eizik and continued davening.

At six o’clock the next morning Reb Yitzchak felt a strong tug on his arm. He opened his eyes and saw... Eizik, standing there in a storm of emotions: “Reb Yitzchak,” he was nearly shouting, “your *tefillah* was accepted! I just heard the guards whispering among themselves that Stalin had a stroke yesterday and he is unconscious and completely paralyzed!”

The news quickly spread throughout the camp, causing great excitement. The prisoners could hardly contain their joy at the downfall of the one who wanted to see them annihilated. Rav Yitzchak and the Jews who were with him once again convened for a silent prayer, their goal clear: to continue to daven until the salvation was complete.

Indeed, in the days that followed, Stalin’s condition deteriorated, until on Thursday, 18 Adar, the news of his death spread. The era of Stalin had come to an end. Eizik, and many other distant Jews who were among the prisoners, could no longer ignore the tremendous miracle that had occurred before their very eyes. Although there was a huge spiritual chasm between them and Rav Yitzchak, this time, they approached him with emotion and warmly shook his hands. “*Lehodia shekol kovecha lo yevoshu velo yikolmu lanetzach kol hachosim Bach*.”

Umasok Ha’or, *Megillas Esther*, p. 556