

# And All Believe

A Weekly Leaflet from the House of "Bnei Emunim"



## Parshas Korach

In the Pathways of Emunim:

Amen and Prayer in this Parsha

### The Great Value of the Nefilas Apayim Prayer

#### The Source of the Nefilas Apayim Prayer

One of the most outstanding and visible parts of our regular prayers is that of Nefilas Apayim, which is also known as 'Tachanun'. The practice of saying this prayer, which is anchored in holiness, dates all the way back to our Avos and was kept up from generation to generation until and including this very day. There are many reasons for it, and different ways of practicing it, some mystic and some very straightforward. There are numerous mentions of Tachanun in the writings of the Rishonim and Acharonim regarding its special powers and laws. In this short article we can merely touch upon a tip of them and taste a bit of the sweet flavor of Chazal's sayings so that we can hope to properly appreciate the value of this exalted prayer.

Nefilas Apayim is mentioned several times in our parsha, among them the pasuk which describes Moshe and Aharon's prayer after the terrible blame laid against the Jewish people as a result of the controversy of Korach and his group (16:22). "And they fell upon their faces and said: Hashem the A-mighty G-d of the spirits of every flesh: shall one person sin and Your anger fall upon the entire people..."

This pasuk, says Rabbenu Bechaye, is the very source of the Nefilas Apayim practice as part of our prayers. He explains that it has three basic purposes: 1) to impose the fear of Hashem upon us; 2) to make us exhibit sorrow and submission before Hashem, and 3) to express the surrender of our physical senses and feelings in face of the exalted glory of the Creator.

#### The Foundations of the Nefilas Apayim Prayer

Rabbenu Bechaye continues by expanding on these ideas. He first explains that a person standing in prayer must feel as if he is standing in the very presence of the Shechina, as is written in Tehillim (16:8): "I envision Hashem before me always." This surely fosters a sense of extreme awe of Hashem. This is why we bury our head during Nefilas Apayim - to signify humility and shamefulness, in the hope that the necessary fear of Hashem rest upon us, as is the requisite of proper prayer. We also find that Moshe Rabbenu did this, as is written (Shemos 3:6), "And Moshe hid his face because he was afraid of gazing upon Elokim."

Rabbenu Bechaya also writes that Nefilas Apayim signifies pain and submissiveness. When a person feels sorrow and submission, his prayers are more readily received, as is brought in Bava Metzuya (59b): It is told of R' Eliezer Hagadol, that throughout the years following his exclusion [niddui] by the Sages, headed by Rabban Gamliel when he refused to accept the majority opinion of Chazal in the famous controversy regarding the kashrus of a certain oven [tannur shel achnai], his wife - Ima Shalom, who was also the sister of Rabban Gamliel - prevented him from 'falling upon his face' during prayer so that any resentment he felt for having been ostracized would not be aroused during this prayer.

One time, however, Ima Shalom made a mistake in her

calendar calculation, and thinking that Rosh Chodesh would fall on the thirtieth day of the month, she forgot to be vigilant over her husband [since one does not say Tachnun on Rosh Chodesh]. Another opinion says that she did know that it wasn't Rosh Chodesh, but at that moment, a poor man knocked on the door, begging for some bread, and she became distracted. In any case, on that day, R' Eliezer did do Nefilas Apayim. When she saw this, all she could say was: "Arise. You've already killed my older brother." Indeed, a town crier began circulating with the announcement that Rabban Gamliel had passed away. The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chayim 131b) brings this story in order to teach us the tremendous power of the Tachanun prayer.

Rabbenu Bechaye continues: The third purpose of Nefilas Apayim is to show our personal surrender before the infinite greatness of the Creator. One who falls upon his face and thus covers his eyes and seals his mouth, acting like one whose arms and legs are shackled in chains, demonstrates thus that he is incapable of seeing his worth for the good or the bad, and is ignorant in all his doings and goings before Hashem, and would be powerless were it not for Hashem enabling him to do anything whatsoever. Therefore, says Rav Hai Gaon, that a person should fall upon his left hand, since this demonstrates subservience, and it is the left side upon which we recline at the Seder, commemorating our freedom from bondage.

#### Absolute Self Sacrifice

The Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 131) adds by quoting the words of the Zohar Hakadosh (Bamidbar 120b) that the significance of Nefilas Apayim is to show our absolute mesiras neffesh, like a person who collapses in helplessness. A person should therefore think during this time that he is prepared to sacrifice his life for the honor of Hashem.

Chassidim tell that R' Tzvi Hirsh of Zhiditchov did not recite Tachanun on Fridays and Sundays, explaining that in order for him to do so properly, he had to prepare himself a day before. He could not do so on Shabbos, and therefore refrained from saying it on Sunday. As for Friday, he knew that since he said Tachanun with such tremendous concentration, kavana, and sense of total self sacrifice, as the Zohar urges, he was afraid that he might surrender his soul during the prayer and his followers would have to occupy themselves with his burial on Erev Shabbos. (Divrei Yechezkel Hechadash, Halichos, Tachanun).

#### A Tzaddik in Place of a Sefer Torah

There is a well known halacha that one does not do Nefilas Apayim where there is no Sefer Torah (see Rema Orach Chayim 131b). R' Aharon Berechya of Modena (Maavar Yabok, Attar, Annan Haketores A) writes that since Nefilas Apayim requires tremendous concentration lest one arouse the Measure of Strict Justice and suppress the Measure of Compassion, one should refrain from saying Tachanun unless there is a Sefer Torah present which can protect the worshipper from strict heavenly justice.

Dear Jew! Upon hearing 'Amen', STOP, LISTEN, and ANSWER Amen Intently

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The Rema of Pano (Asara Ma'amoros, Chikur Din Vol. I chap. 23; quoted briefly by the Chassam Sofer on the Shulchan Aruch) innovates that certain tzaddikim are capable of controlling and guiding their thoughts properly and are, consequently, able to fill the place of an actual Sefer Torah in this matter. This halacha is learned from Yosef Hatzaddik who was, himself, comparable to a Sefer Torah, which is why Yaakov Avinu fell upon his face when he saw him [after 22 years]. The Rema of Pano adds that few are the people who can qualify to represent a Sefer Torah...

A fascinating fact is brought about the Admor R' Yisrael of Ruzhin in Ner Yisrael (Vol. IV p.34): Upon one of his travels, he found himself in a forest, and stopped to pray with those who accompanied him. After the chazzan repeated the shemone esrei, they debated whether to say Tachanun or not. Said the Rebbe: "Nu, I am here, after all," in other words: "I am like a Sefer Torah..."

### Amen in Our Parsha

It is written in Mishlei (28:20): "A faithful man shall abound with blessings, but one who rushes to become rich shall not go unpunished." Chazal expound (Shmos Rabba 51a): "'The faithful man' refers to Moshe Rabbenu, of whom it is written 'In all My house, he is loyal.' He merited having blessing rest upon everything he did. 'And one who rushes to become rich' refers to Korach, who was a Levi, but sought to become the Kohen Gadol and in the end, was buried in the bowels of the earth.

R' Yechezkel of Kozhmir explained: "Moshe Rabbenu was called a faithful and loyal one because in his humbleness, he did not seek to become one of the kohanim who bless the people but was satisfied with being a Levi who replies 'Amen'. And since 'one who answers Amen is even greater than one who recites the blessing', he 'abounded with blessings.' Korach, who wanted the Kehuna Gedola and wanted to be one who blesses, ended up in Gehinnom (Nechmad MiZahav Pekudei).

## Amen for Pardon and Atonement

### Tales of Emunim:

*A story about Amen and Prayer*

### The Prayer of the Martyrs of Bordil

The following awesome story reveals to us the ancient source for the 'Vehu Rachum' prayer which is part of Tachanun, as brought in the works of the Rishonim:

It was the time of the Churban. Aspasyanus Ceasar (Vespian) had encamped with his army and laid siege to Jerusalem, destroyed the Second Bais Hamikdash down to its very foundations and slaughtered most of the inhabitants. The survivors were exiled to a foreign land with barely the clothing on their backs. As if this was not bad enough, the manner of their exile was done with horrible brutality.

A fleet of unseaworthy ships anchored in the harbor were packed full with thousands of Jews from the elite of Jerusalem's population to be taken to an unknown destination. The Jews who were loaded upon the rickety ships were no longer the proud and distinguished people of before the Churban, but were now bowed and despaired. The anchors were raised and their fate was sealed; they would be taken to wherever the captain decided, hoping that the voyage would at least be a safe one and their destination, a hospitable country.

They learned of their bitter fate a few hours later. Aspasyanus had different plans altogether. He intended for all the passengers to die at sea. Indeed, these ships had no captain to steer them or sailors to guide them. The ships sailed off to sea, at the mercy of the winds and the waves.

The ships drifted in the open seas with no destination. The passengers tried to guide them but were helpless. The situation became worse and worse, to the point of utter despair. The Jews prayed and wept to Hashem with all their might and lo! Hashem harkened to their prayers, sending a favorable wind which guided the ships to safe havens, to the countries of Leiden, Orlado and Bordil.

The passengers of the ship which landed at Bordil entered the city and before long, had settled in. The ruler at the time was

benevolent and received them well, helped them find housing and even gave them fields and vineyards from which to support themselves.

The Jews lived peacefully in this place for many, many years, so long as the ruler was in power. When he died, however, he was succeeded by a cruel and wicked man who repealed all the favorable laws and discriminated harshly against the Jewish residents. He passed new decrees and persecuted them to the point of death.

Two of the exiled Jews in Bordil were the brothers Yosef and Binyamin and a cousin, Shmuel, all three talmidei chachomim and very upright people. Seeing the suffering of their people, they put on sackcloth, spent days in fasting and rent the heavens with their tearful prayers.

They composed a special prayer which they hoped would be received in Heaven. It is the 'Vehu Rachum' prayer. Yosef wrote the first part - "Vehu Rachum" until "Melech Chanun v'Rachum Ata." Binyamin continued it with "Ana Melech Rachun v'Chanun" until "Ain Kamocha" and their cousin Shmuel completed it from "Ain Kamoch" to "Shema Yisrael..."

To their great joy, this prayer was, indeed, effective, and before long and in a won-

drous way, Hashem rescued the community with a terrible fate. The three decided to transcribe this prayer and sent copies of it to many Jewish communities, urging them to make it part of their regular Monday and Thursday prayers. And so, we also hope and pray that just as Hashem saved them in their time of need, He will similarly save us all and deliver us from all our troubles. Amen

(Kolbo Simach 18: Explanation of the Tefila by the Rokeach 67)



## אחד מלאך נברא

A Gathering took place on Erev Shabbos Parshas Beha'aloscho  
In the home of Maran Hagaon  
**R' YITZCHAK ZILBERSTEIN** shlita  
Rav and Av Beis Din of Ramat Elchanan

For the drawing of the monthly lottery of participants of "Shachar Akadmeka"

For the encouragement of reciting Birchos Hashachar for Bnei Yeshiva in partnership

During this moving event, Hagaon shlita wished to convey a personal message to the Bnei Yeshiva who succeeded in strengthening themselves in reciting Birkos Hashachar in partnership during the past month:

**Dear and Beloved Bnei Yeshiva!**

Answering Amen constitutes accepting the yoke of Heaven and the declaration of faith in the Creator and in the blessing just heard. In our holy writings it is brought that an angel is created with every answering of 'Amen', since this word has the numerical value of 'malach', and also spells the acrostic of 'Echod Malach Nivra' - One Angel is Created.

Fortunate are you, Bnei Torah, for sanctifying Hashem's Name by strengthening yourselves through answering Amen for the daily morning blessings.

Surely this merit will stand you by for eternity.



To join this project of 'Shachar Akadmeka' for Bnei Yeshiva Call today:

# 03-917-91-91

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