

And All Believe

A Weekly Leaflet from the House of "Bnei Emunim"



Parshas Pinchas

In the Pathways of Emunim:

Amen and Prayer in this Parsha

The Importance of Concentration in the Blessings of Geula-Redemption

The Reading Arouses the Season

"The reading arouses the season," a well known saying which teaches us the correlation between the weekly parsha and current events, is based on the words of the Ramchal in "Derech Hashem" (Vol. IV Chapter 8:6). He explains there that our prophets established the practice of reading a weekly portion of the Torah, Shabbos after Shabbos, as well as the pertinent parshiyos dealing with the festivals. Their purpose was to highlight and focus the glow of the Torah's holiness radiating from between its verses and letters, each parsha and its issues, adapted to the time and season when it is read. This is why, the Ramchal explains, that on festivals and special days they established that we read the verses relating to that special time so as to help us absorb the spiritual aura of those particular days via the power of the Torah, which is the strongest of all. The Sfas Emes writes in our parsha (642) that it was not by chance that Parshas Pinchas is read during the Three Weeks or very close to them. This parsha tells in detail about the usual temidim and musafim sacrifices, the reading of which is designed to arouse in our hearts pangs of regret and loss over the Beis Hamikdash - as well as the discontinuation of the korbonos. They are meant to evoke a strong desire to see these reinstated as in the past, as well as to arouse a yearning for the final geula-redemption which we need so badly. This is the season most conducive to pray for it.

How Must We Pray for the Geula?

From a superficial aspect, one would think that we don't really need special arousal to make us pray for Jerusalem, the Beis Hamikdash and the restoration of the korbonos since in the course of our daily prayers and blessings throughout the day, we utter prayers for the geula and the rebuilding of the Mikdash. But if we stop to think more profoundly, we can assume that this is the very crux of the problem.

R' Yehuda Halevi addressed this idea in his work, Hakuzari (Essay 2:24) in the answer to the Kuzari king's question: Why are the Jews not being redeemed, despite the fact that since the Churban, which took place so many years before, they have prayed countless prayers? R' Yehuda Halevi replies: "Divine matters only affect a person in a certain way, be it little or great. If we were to cry out to the G-d of our fathers with perfect heart and willing soul, we would be praying like our ancestors did in Egypt. But when we utter the words '...to bow to His holy mountain', 'to bow before His footstool' and 'Who restores His Shechina to Zion', it is like the twittering of a bird because we don't even think about what we are saying..."

In other words, if we were to say the prayers requesting the rebuilding of the Mikdash sincerely, from the depths of our hearts, we would surely be answered in the same way that our ancestors were redeemed in Egypt, thus, the fact that our many, many prayers are not answered is because our prayers are not said with the proper kavana, or concentration and fervor, and we hardly even pay attention to the important requests uttered by our mouths.

Rabbenu Yehonassan Eibshitz writes in his intro-

duction to the blessing of `Boneh Yerushalayim ("Yaaros Dvash" Vol. I, Essay 1): "One should shed profuse tears for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the restoration of the dynasty of David Hamelech, because this is the ultimate purpose of mankind, for if we do not have Jerusalem and the dynasty of David Hamelech - wherefore do we need life? And if the heavenly angels weep over the destruction of Jerusalem day and night without cease, how can we be silent and not weep over the desecration of Hashem's Name ever since the Churban and the downfall of the kingdom of David..."

Hashem Yearns for our Prayers

If we wish to understand the importance of our prayers for the geula before Hashem, we should stop to think that ever since the Churban, Hashem yearns and expects our prayers, day by day, from each individual asking that He restore His Shechina to Zion with compassion.

Chazal expressed this thought in different places. One example is from Maseches Derech Eretz (Chapter on Peace): "R' Yehoshua ben Levi said: Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael: You caused Me to destroy My house and exile My children. Had they asked after Me [prayed], I would have forgiven them."

The Admor R' Mordechai Chaim of Slonim used to tell his chasidim, tears falling from his eyes, of the person who came to the Admor of Apta and bemoaned his sad fate. He had once been a very successful cattle dealer but slowly, his business slacked until he became very poor. The Apta Rebbe listened patiently to his sad tale and then blessed him from the depths of his heart, adding some good advice regarding his business.

The dealer was about to leave the room, pleased and reassured, but the tzaddik called him back and said in pain: "Look here, I just spoke to you about your business with cattle but you mustn't forget that a terrible misfortune took place today for the Jewish people, like every day since the Churban, that the daily tamid sacrifice was not brought. I see that you are very disturbed over the loss of your wealth and the decline of your business. But are similarly distressed over the fact that we don't have a Beis Hamikdash any more, that there is no avoda there and no kohanim to offer up the korbonos? How can it be that unimportant things cause you such pain, when the loss of the pride and glory of our people, is no longer with us? Doesn't that bother you at all? Do you totally ignore that?" (Rosh Tzurim: Shlach)

Why the Publication of the Bach's writings was Delayed

We can learn about the importance of prayer for the Beis Hamikdash from the following story about the Bach. Because he was not accustomed to recite the midnight Tikun Chatzos over the Churban, it was decided in Heaven to prevent the publication of his works. Thus, time after time, something came up to stall the printing of his important sefarim. This fact distressed him deeply until one time, after much toil and trouble, he succeeded in finding a satisfactory answer to a halachic question he had on the words of the Tur which had sorely puzzled him for many days.

At that moment, he couldn't help remembering the trouble he encountered in printing his works, which would have enriched the Torah world, and he suddenly began weeping from the depths of his pure heart. As he wept, he thought to himself: While I am weeping over my personal sorrow, shouldn't I also weep over the exile of the Shechina and the Churban? This caused him to weep all the more, and it was those tears that succeeded in revoking the heavenly decree. From then on, the author of 'Megale Amukos' encountered no difficulties and was able to publish his works ('Binyan David' Eicha 3:39).

The Advantage of Praying over the Churban

In studying the words of Chazal in this matter, we see that one who sincerely prays for the geula is rewarded because of the special power, the segulos, of such prayers. We find in 'Tana Dvei Eliyahu' (Rabbah P"D): "Every single Torah scholar who is sincere, and sighs in pain over the pain of Hashem and the [fallen] honor of Israel throughout his days, who truly desires and awaits the [restoration of the] honor of Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdash and prays for the speedy Redeption, is immediately rewarded with an infusion of Ruach Hakodesh."

The Tiferes Shlomo of Radomsk (Parshas Re'eh) explains the teaching of Chazal (Berachos 30a) homiletically. They say that when praying, one should direct one's heart towards Yerushalayim, but he

expands and says that one should think about the Churban and the exile of the Shechina; in this way, a person will merit having his prayers received for they will ascend to Heaven via the Beis Hamikdash, which is the very gateway to Heaven.

Amen in this Parsha

It is stated in this parsha: "Therefore say that I shall give him the covenant of peace." The letters of the word 'lachen - therefore' add up to one hundred. R' Aharon Hakohen of Luneil, one of the prime poskim of the generation of Rishonim, writes in his 'Orchos Chaim' (Meah Berachos 6) that being constant in reciting one hundred blessings a day guarantees a person reward in Olam Haba. Hashem, as it were, promises that if you say (lachen), one hundred, I will give you My covenant of peace and you will be rewarded eternally.

R' Yitzchak of Gelid, one of the Baghdad sages, adds in his work, 'Tzelach Rechav' on this parsha that between the letters of 'lachen emor' is hidden the word 'amen', a hint that whoever answers Amen merits Hashem's covenant of peace, that is, eternal life. As Chazal say (Shabbos 119b), "Whoever answers 'Amen' with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him." And conversely, whoever takes answering 'Amen' lightly descends to the lowest level of Gehinnom (Zohar Vayelech 286b).

Tales of Emunim:

A story about Amen and Prayer

The Prayer That Caused a Divine Revelation

The early years of 5300. The place: Tzefas, a city filled with sages and scribes, many of whom had been privileged to acquire wisdom from the Ari Hakadosh and were affectionately known as the Lion Cubs (Ari-lion). The time is about three hours before sunrise but a Divine Spirit winds its way among the narrow alleys. From time to time, one can distinguish white shrouded figures hurrying along the cobblestones of this ancient city, their lips murmuring inaudible words.

The daily schedule in Tzefas has already begun and you can find exalted figures in the various shuls, studying, wrapped up in their inner holy world of avodas Hashem.

One of the outstanding figures of this group of ancient times was R' Avraham Halevi, a disciple of the Ari, famous for his work 'Tikunei Shabbos'. He began his day at midnight, and would go outside, crying loudly and bitterly, "Arise in honor of Hashem Yisborach! The Shechina is in exile; our holy temple has been burned down and the Jewish people are suffering terribly." He had a special regard for Torah scholars and would call to them through their windows by name, refusing to budge until they arose from their beds.

Within a short time, the entire city would be filled with a mingling of voices at their study, be it gemara, mishnayos, Zohar or midrashim. The simpler folk would recite Tehillim, study Neviim or chant prayer-songs: piyutim, bakashos and zemiros.

The Ari Hakadosh showed special preference to R' Avraham and even testified of him that he was a gilgul [soul transmigrator] of the prophet Yirmeyahu. One time, the Ari summoned him and said: "My son, I know that your days are up and that you won't be able to continue your life in this world. There is one way, however, for you to have a reprieve of another twenty-two years of life: you must go to Yerushalayim and stand before the Kosel Maaravi and pour your

heart out in prayer and tears. If your prayers are willingly received, you will merit beholding the Shechina and you will then know that twenty-two years will be added to your life."

When R' Avraham Halevi heard this, he sold all of his possessions so as to have fare for the trip, and set out for Yerushalayim. When he arrived, he donned sackcloth and fasted for three days. At the end of this period, he went to the Kosel and prayed amid profuse tears.

At one point, he raised his eyes and beheld the awesome figure of a woman clad in mourning. He could only see her from the back but he immediately fell upon his face and began shouting and weeping, "Mother! Mother! Mother Zion! Woe unto me that I have seen you thus in your mourning!"

He continued sobbing for the next few hours, tearing at his hair and beard in frenzy until he fainted and fell into a deep sleep. In his dream he beheld the same figure. She laid her hand upon his face and wiped away his tears. "Be comforted, my son, Avraham," she said. "There is hope for your future and sons will return to their borders. For I will bring back the exiles and will have compassion over them."

R' Avraham awoke and

returned to Tzefas in good spirits. When he went to his master, the Ari, the latter said to him, "My son, I see that you were fortunate enough to behold the Shechina. Now you can be certain that you will live another twenty-two years." And so it was...

(From a letter of R' Shlomo Meinstril of Tzefas 365, printed in 'Igrois Eretz Yisrael' p. 205)

Who does not want to be a BeN OlaM Haba?

Chazal said (Shabbos 119b):
"Whoever answers 'Amen' with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him."

This is hinted at in our parsha from the words:
 "LacheN EMor, I shall give him My covenant of peace."

This teaches us that by answering Amen, one merits eternal peace, that is, life in Olam Haba.

(Tzelach Rechav Parshas Pinchas)

Let us all therefore be careful in answering Amen after every blessing, especially after the Morning Blessings, and in this merit, we shall also be granted the Covenant of Peace and be welcomed through the gates of Gan Eden.