

And All Believe

A Weekly Leaflet from the House of "Bnei Emunim"



Parshas Ekev

In the Pathways of Emunim: Amen and Prayer in this Parsha

The Institution of One Hundred Blessings Daily

The Origin of this Tradition

A person is required to recite at least one hundred blessings a day. The source of this tradition, which is anchored in Halacha in the Shulchan Aruch (אור"ח מ"ג), was derived by Chazal (in Menachos 3:2 and Rashi ibid) from the verse in our parsha (י:י) "And now, Yisrael, what -- does Hashem ask of you..." They said that it hints at מאה - or one hundred. Tosfos there writes in the name of Rabbenu Tam that they learned this from the fact that this very pasuk has one hundred letters. (And while it is actually written with ninety-nine letters, nevertheless, the word שואל, which is written without the `vov', is usually written fully with it, which adds up to one hundred.)

The Rambam writes in our parsha that whoever completes one hundred brachos a day is considered to have fulfilled the pasuk "To fear Hashem your G-d and to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve Hashem your G-d with your whole heart and soul." By doing so, he is accredited with keeping the entire Torah. Since completing one hundred brachos a day is not such a difficult burden, the Torah writes, "What [after all, as it were,] does Hashem ask of you?"

R' Shachne Tzvi of Nemirov, a talmid of the Meor Einayim zt"l (Parshas Vayikra), writes in his work, "Harei Besamim" (Vayikra), that there are more reasons why the practice of saying one hundred brachos a day is encompassed in the word `mah', since that is also the numerical value of adam, 100, to teach us that a `man' [of stature] is one who is punctilious in saying one hundred brachos properly. This is hinted at in the words of Chazal: "Don't read `mah' (adam) but `mei'ah', a man who recites one hundred blessings daily.

In the essay before us, we will try to briefly review precious drops from the continuous fountain of thoughts written about this vital takana in the teachings of Chazal, and the Rishonim and Acharonim who emphasized its great significance and enthusiastically praised its wondrous advantages and segulos.

What Protects Yisrael from Adversity?

Chazal suggest that the practice of `one hundred blessings' originated with David Hamelech, as we find in Medrash Bamidbar Rabba 18:21. A terrible epidemic raged during his reign, with a hundred people dying prematurely each day. Along came [the Sages] and instituted the recital of one hundred brachos, after which the plague abated. Chazal substantiated this cause-and-effect correlation from the pasuk, "The words of David ben Yishai... the man who was raised up high" (Shmuel II 23:1). The letters of כל -- high add up to one hundred, which teaches us that it was David Hamelech who instituted and established the quota of one hundred blessings a day.

These words of Chazal are also quoted in the Tur (Orach Chayim 46) where the Bach writes that it was not without purpose that the Tur chose to quote the reason for this takana and not simply establish the Halachah; this is in order to teach us that the danger of one hundred Jews dying every day hovers over us to this day, chv'sh, and in our times the very same segulah remedy to prevent this is by reciting one hundred blessings a day.

The Rokeach (Hilchos Berachos siman 220) writes that the one hundred brachos which protect the Jewish people from the one hundred curses enumerated in Parshas Ki Savo [actually 98 curses with the addition of "also every sickness and blow..."]. The Ram de Lunzano, in his work "Shtei Yados" (p. 102) writes: "Take heed... to recite each day one hundred brachos so that you be blessed through them, for these blessings enable us to live and survive in this exile."

One of the men who frequented the home of Maran Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l told of the time a certain erudite talmid chacham who had succumbed to a terrible disease came to Maran for advice and blessing. "What can I do to prevent the sword which is poised at my throat from killing me?" R' Shlomo Zalman thought for a while, then said, "Look here, I am not in the practice of telling people what to do, but I can tell you what I would do if chv'sh I was in your position. I would strengthen myself in reciting one hundred berachos a day, and I am not talking about routine uttering, but saying them with intense kavanah, as the Halachah requires."

Maran's devotee added that when R' Shlomo Zalman said these words, his face flamed a bright red, as if they came

from an intense inner fire in his bones. It should be remembered that Maran was famous for his great heed in the matter of brachos, which he always recited with great fervor. Nevertheless, he found it proper to add further reinforcement increasingly to the end of his days ("Mitzvas Hameiah Brachos Kehilchasah p. 21).

One Hundred Blessings Corresponding to the Six Hundred Thousand Jews

The Rama of Pano writes an interesting calculation through which we can understand the workings of the one hundred brachos in protecting and saving the Jewish People, as follows: The reward of one brachah is ten gold dinar, each one of which is worth twenty five silver dinar, or two hundred and fifty silver dinar per blessing. Multiply that by one hundred and you get twenty-five thousand silver dinar. Each silver dinar is worth six maos; altogether, one hundred and fifty thousand maos. Each ma'ah is worth two pundyonim; each pundyon equals four isrim - all together - a sum of six hundred thousand isrim.

It states in Bamidbar (30:3): "...לאסור איסר על נפשו...to bind his soul with a bond." This hints at the iser, each one of which is capable of saving a Jewish soul. If so, six hundred thousand isrim are able to redeem six hundred thousand Jews (Maamarei HaRam miPano, Maamar Tzivon Hashem, Vol. III Os Daled).

The Benefit of Reciting One Hundred Berachos

Our Torah leaders throughout the ages have shown a special affinity for this takana of saying one hundred berachos a day and have enthused over its benefits and special segulah powers. They discussed it in their works, both through its revealed properties as well as its hidden, secret advantages. For example, we quote the work "Kol Bo" (Siman A): "Come and see how much Hakadosh Baruch Hu loved us, by having commanded us to say one hundred blessings each day so that we might earn one thousand gold coins every day. Each berachah is worth ten gold coins, as Chazal said (Chulin 87a), "A heavenly echo resounded and said: The kos shel berachah cup of wine over which bircas hamazon is said is worth forty gold coins, ten zehuvim for each and every berachah."

In the introduction to his commentary on the siddur, the Baal HaRokeach writes: "And since we sinned before Him, the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, and we have neither the mizbeiach nor the korban, therefore, the One who seeks the good of our people commanded us to say before Him one hundred berachos every day, as He promised to Avraham Avinu. "For even at a time when the Beis Hamikdash will not be standing, if they recite before Me one hundred blessings every day, I will consider it as if they had sacrificed all of the korbonos." The Netziv of Volozhin (in "Meishiv Davar" Vol. V siman 90) said that this is true even though among the sacrifices brought were those pertaining to the nation as a whole and others brought by individuals. Chazal instituted the regular prayers corresponding to them, like shemoneh esrei, and parallel to the individual sacrifices were those blessings that pertained to specific things, so that altogether, these would channel to the world a great bounty even after the Beis Hamikdash would be destroyed due to our sins.

In the sefer "Meah Berachos" (Maamar Hakoras Hatov) the author dwells upon an interesting point. The source pasuk uses the word שואל, what does Hashem `ask' of you, to indicate that Hashem does not take the blessings unto Himself but `asks' or `borrows' them, as it were, from each person in order to give them back to him many times over as His boundless blessings of goodness.

Additional Hinted Sources for the Mitzvah of One Hundred Blessings

It seems that the takana of one hundred berachos seems to be one of the most frequently discussed by our Rishonim who supplied hints for this practice, only some of which we are able to present:

Rabbenu Bechaye in this parsha, as well as Daas Zekeinim, learn it from a pasuk in Tehillim: "Lo, thus shall be blessed a G-d-fearing man" (128:4). The words לך ינין add up to one hundred so that one can interpret to mean: Lo, thus, with one hundred (blessings) shall a G-d-fearing man bless.

The Baal HaTurim (Devarim 33:1) writes that the regulation of one hundred brachos was already introduced by Moshe Rabbenu, deriving this from the acrostic of משה איש האלוקים, whereas the end letters of these three words spell out `Moshe'.

And when you arise from your study ask yourself how to implement what you learned (Letter of the Rambam)

Study is Not the Primary Goal - Deeds Are (Avos 1:17) Preach Well and Practice Well (Chagiga 14b)

Rabbenu Aharon of Loneil writes ('Orchos Chaim' Meah Brachos Os A) that we can find an allusion to it from the pasuk, "לִנְיָ - therefore, say: Behold, I am giving him My covenant of peace." This seems to promise that one who answers to one hundred blessings is guaranteed a portion in olam haba, since the word "לִנְיָ" adds up to one hundred. Thus, whoever 'says' those one hundred blessings gains Hashem's covenant of peace, which is eternal life in olam haba.

Count Your Blessings

Our Torah leaders of all generations have always been very careful in reciting one hundred berachos since, as we have already shown, this is not an elective practice but something very firmly substantiated in Halachah, like all other halachos. Furthermore, Hagaon R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita quotes (from 'Teshuvos v'Hanhagos Vol. II siman 129) that the gaon R' Zambrisky zt"l used to dwell on the wording of the Rambam (Tefilah 7:16): "...to count all the berachos until he completes the hundred quota each day." One must specifically enumerate each and every one.

In practice, the poskim calculated and found that whoever is very precise in his daily prayers and berachos can easily arrive at one hundred (see 'Mishne Berura' 46:4), where the daily quorum is precisely enumerated). Since on Shabbos the shemone esrei only has seven blessings, one should complete the missing ones by eating fruit, sweets and treats, and making blessings of fragrance during the course of Shabbos ('Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 291).

Hagaon R' Yaakov Emdin zt"l wrote in his siddur (Siddur Yaavetz Part I p 579): "One should count, beginning from the night, how many berachos he succeeds in making, that they not be less than the required one hundred per day... and should enumerate them one by one to make an accurate calculation. Whenever he recites a beracha, he should write it down to keep track of the number... On a fast day, as well as on Shabbos and Yom Tov when he misses many [opportunities], he should bear in mind how he can complete the number with other blessings. On Shabbos he should prepare a kind of ballot box in which he lays a certain food item like fruit or seeds whenever he recites a beracha until he reaches the desired number." Yaavetz concludes: "This computation is truly very dear unto Hashem."

Reciting the Berachos Properly

Before we conclude this essay, it is important for us to remember that in order to have those blessings count as the required one hundred, we must say them properly, as the Rambam writes: (שו"ת, ת. ט. ס. רס"א): "Reciting the one hundred berachos hastily and haphazardly is a bad mistake... for all the different ways of serving Hashem through speech are also intended to have people contemplate what they are saying and focus their hearts, realizing that they are addressing the Master of the whole world... And if this act of speech is intending to elevate him, how is he permitted to hurry or divert his attention from what he is uttering? One who does not know or understand what he is saying is comparable to a parrot or idiot who [mindlessly] repeats words they are taught."

We find in the ancient work, "Seder Hayom" that the one hundred blessings which a person says each day should be ones worthy of counting, that is, utterances made with the proper concentration. For if not, they are considered invalid blessings which do not enter the count of one hundred, and, on the contrary, are considered like sins.

We can expand on the words of the Zohar and learn a way of increasing the power of the hundred blessings, which is by answering 'Amen'. The Zohar writes (Ekev 271 I, according to 'Matok MiDvash'): When these berachos ascend from below, there is no gate or opening above, nor is there any appointed one above who will not open all those doors and announce throughout the heavens declaring: This is the homage-gift for the King sent by ploni. This is the gift of perfection, as it should be. And what blessing is considered proper and perfect? One which was answered with an 'Amen'. Such a blessing is the most perfect, complete, and the most desirable.

Amen in the Parsha

Where do find a hint about answering 'Amen' in our parsha? From the pasuk, "For Hashem your G-d is bringing you to a good land, a land of water streams." The initial letters of 'ארץ נהלי מים' spell out אמון. Chazal say that hints at the fact that whoever answers 'Amen' is given a place in Gan Eden, which is also referred to as a 'land of water springs' because of the four rivers issuing from it. This is explained in the pasuk (Bereishis 2:10), "And a river issues from Eden to irrigate the garden, and from there it separates into four heads" ('Yoshia Zion' Ekev).

Tales of Emunim:

A story about Amen and Prayer

The Chazon Ish Saw Into the Future

We find the Chofetz Chaim sitting in a train pulling out from the station in Radin. He is bent over a sefer on his lap. The hustle and bustle all around him don't even begin to distract him. Until he reaches his destination, Lida, where he is going to reinforce certain important religious matters which need chizuk, he is oblivious to everything but his study.

After a long, tiring trip, the train finally stops at Lida where hundreds of Jews are waiting to welcome him. Young and old, all are wearing their Yom Tov best since not every day does the gadol hador come to their city.

The Chofetz Chaim gets off the train. His advanced age, combined with the travails of travel, show their signs in his tired expression and slow, cumbersome walk. There is no bench in sight but the heads of the community collect some suitcases, which they place one atop the other to form a makeshift seat so that their eminent guest can rest his weary bones. The Chofetz Chaim is in no rush to sit down. Standing there, he looks all around him intently with a long, sweeping gaze. It seems as if he is loathe to sit down when everyone else is standing almost on top of him. The crowd gets the message and recedes several steps. Now he is ready to sit down.

The well known R' Arye Leib Bakst zt"l, Rosh Yeshivas Ateres Mordechai of Detroit, tells the following: "I was a young lad in those days, studying in the yeshiva of Hagaon R' Yaakov Neiman zt"l, who was then the Rosh Yeshiva of Lida and later, Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr Yisrael in Petach Tikva. Like the rest of my friends, I, too, pressed myself into the crowd waiting at the train station with eager anticipation.

"When the Chofetz Chaim got off the train, I pushed myself even closer until I found myself very close to the gadol hador. When the crowd stepped back to give him breathing space, I remained where I was, right next to him.

"The Chofetz Chaim sat down and rewarded me with an affectionate look. I froze, overcome with emotion, unable to utter a word. I finally succeeded in rap-

idly stating the name of my father, whom the Chofetz Chaim knew well from way back. To my surprise, the tzaddik began murmuring something to himself: 'Ribono shel Olam! Look at your beloved son. Here, before You, stands a young lad who has left his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, just so that he could study Torah!' His words were to me like cold water in a parched throat, especially since I was very homesick.

"I was about to turn away when he grasped my hand and said, 'My son, be very careful in saying berachos and this will save you from trouble and tribulation.'

"I found the words of this Saba Kadisha puzzling and mysterious. Why had the Chofetz Chaim chosen to speak to me about berachos, of all things? But I internalized his words and from that day on, decided to be very careful in this area.

"In later years, when I merited being saved time and again from grave dangers during the terrible Holocaust, I understood why the Chofetz Chaim had chosen to urge me in this matter. I came to see, without doubt, the special power of berachos which David Hamelech had already instituted to save Jews from threats

and dangers. I am certain that this caution is what protected me and gave me merit during my difficult hours to save me from all harm."

(Notrei Amen' p. 119)

אני מיד נושעתי

A Moving Letter Received by the Editors of BNEI EMU

Letter to the Editor
"וכל מאמינים" - And All Believe" Weekly Parsha Sheet
POB 102 Bnei Brak

I lack the words to thank you from the depths of my heart for your tremendous activity to promote 'Amen' and implanting the importance of answering 'Amen', especially after the morning blessings.

I would like to share with you what I experienced. I was need of a yeshua. I prayed extensively for it but was not rewarded with an answer. Reading your weekly parsha sheets led me to resolve to recite the birchos hashachar each morning in the presence of a 'partner' and to look for opportunities to answer 'Amen' whenever I could. I hoped and prayed that Chazal's promise that whoever answers 'Amen' has his days lengthened for the good -- be fulfilled with me.

I kept this promise up for a whole month and to my joy and relief, אני מיד נושעתי -- I was immediately answered with a complete deliverance. "Hodu laShem!"

Again, accept my heartfelt blessings for your wonderful work; may you succeed in increasing kvod Shamayim!

Sincerely,
Y. V. Jerusalem

