

# And All Believe

A Weekly Leaflet from the House of "Bnei Emunim"



arshas Re'eh

In the Pathways of Emunim:

Amen and Prayer in this Parsha

## PGiving Tzedakah Before Praying

### "I Will Behold Your Face in Righteousness [צדק]"

Among the many mitzvos with which this parsha is filled is the outstanding mitzvah of tzedakah. It appears in two opposite forms: first as a prohibitive לא תעשה commandment (15:7): "You shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother." It also appears as a positive commandment in the following pasuk, "But you shall open your hand wide to him and shall surely lend him sufficiently for his need which he lacks."

In Masseches Bava Basra (10a and Rashi there), the gemara speaks about R' Elazar who used to give a prutah to a poor man before he prayed. He substantiated this practice from a pasuk in Tehillim (17:15) "I will behold Your face in tzedek." Here the connotation of `tzedek' derives from `tzedakah', charity. Through the power of giving charity, I shall empower myself to stand before Hashem.

A sign of this practice was pointed out by the Baal HaTurim from this parsha. Throughout the entire Tanach, there are only three places where the double form of opening one's hand appears: `pasoach tiftach'. Two of them relate to giving charity: in verse 8 and in verse 11 afterwards. "You shall surely open your hand to your brother," and in Sefer Nachum (3:13), "You shall surely open the gates of your land." From here we are able to learn indirectly of the practice of `opening one's hand' before prayer in order that the gates of Heaven be accordingly opened to receive a person's prayer. The Baal HaTurim adds that if a person does not open his hand to his impoverished brother, he will be punished with the fulfillment of the verse in Mishlei (21:13), "Whoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, shall cry and have his prayer go unanswered."

### How Does Tzedakah Help in Having Prayers Answered?

The gemara does not tell us any more about R' Elazar's custom or explain how it helps boost results in practice. But many of the eminent commentators ventured their various explanations.

The Meiri (Bava Basra 10:1) explains it very simply, that when a person comes to be judged, he should first send a worthy advocator to help him formulate and present his case. The same applies to prayer. By giving charity before making his personal requests, one should give charity, since this has an sponsoring effect. The Maharsha (Vol. I ibid) adds, explaining that when a person prepares to ask the king for a favor, he would be wise to send a gift in advance. It is all the more recommended to do so before standing before the King of kings, for Whom there is no better gift than giving charity.

Yalkut Yehoshua explains this according to the teaching of Chazal (Shabbos 155b): "Whoever shows pity for others is shown compassion from Heaven." The thing a person needs most when praying is heavenly mercy, therefore it is fitting and proper to give tzedakah before davening. In the merit of that charity and of his blessing he can hope to draw heavenly mercy towards him.

The Bnei Yisros'chor explains this differently (see Letter to Farakand). The pasuk states, "He has distributed freely, his righteousness [צדקתו] stands for ever" (112:9). This means that while regarding other mitzvos - the first mitzvah a person performs in the day is written on his forehead, so to speak, and when he performs the subsequent one, the first is erased to make way for the second. But the mitzvah of tzedakah is never erased and remains recorded on his forehead forever. We can therefore say that the mitzvah of tzedakah is the most pertinent aid in promoting the acceptance of one's prayers.

We find in "Bircas Moshe" on Bava Basra (ibid) an explanation by R' Moshe Hagar, Rosh Yeshiva of Seret Vizhnitz, as follows: Since the entire process of prayer is founded upon emunah, what could be better than giving tzedakah to ingrain in a person's heart that faith which is a prerequisite to tefillah? Giving tzedakah is an expression of pure faith since it testifies to our belief that we will never lack anything, even if we are generous in giving to others.

The Remach commented on the pasuk in Yeshaya (54:14),

"...and with tzedakah shall you be established" that "the great power of giving tzedakah before praying is well known to cause the very Shechinah to go before the King and ask for sustenance on behalf of the giver, since it is rescues, as it were, from evil dogs attacking it from all sides" (Ozros Ramchal Yeshaya).

### To Risk One's Very Life

Other sources for this practice are readily found in other sefarim. For example, we find in Taanis (8a), "R' Ami said: a person's prayers are not heard unless he is ready to lay down his life, as it is written (Eichah 41:3): "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to Hashem..." Yalkut Yehoshua explains R' Ami's words: a person's prayer is only heard if he employs his hands in giving charity to the poor. In other words: we shall preface our prayer, which is the service of the heart, by our hands, which is charity given from one hand to another, in which merit our prayers will be accepted favorably by Hashem in Heaven.

In his work, "Olelos Efraim" (Vol. 4 502), the Kli Yokor comments on the gemara in Brachos (8a), "A man should enter through two entrances of a beis knesses before beginning to pray. What does this mean? One `entrance' is that of tzedakah, of which the Torah says: "pasoach tiftach - your shall surely open [your hand to give charity]," using the double form.

The Chida writes in "Avodas Hakodesh" (Tziporen Shamir Os 23) that the acrostic of the pasuk, "צדק לפניו יהיך - Charity shall go before him" (Tehillim 85:14) forms the word ציל, which means `prayer' in Aramaic. Again, this indicates giving tzedakah (tzedek) before praying. The Rebbe of Movshova comments in his work, Shearis Menachem, on the pasuk "Do not eat from it raw -- but rather roasted [ליל] over a fire" (Shemos 12:9), that this can be understood homiletically, additionally translating the word `na' as a plea: Do not ask anything of Hashem in prayer before fulfilling the obligation of `tzli', which is the acronym of "Tede<sup>k</sup> l<sup>e</sup>fanav yehalech", that is, giving charity.

In "Zecher Lechaim" (Vol. 1 p.30) we find another hint based on the verse in Tehillim (118:19), "Open for me the gates of tzedek so that I may pass through and thank Hashem." David Hamelech teaches us that if we open the gates of charity, we will be able to pass through [other heavenly gates] to thank Hashem in prayer.

The Zohar reveals another dimension regarding giving charity before prayer (Zohar Chadash, Tikunim Vol. 2 p 83a): Tzedakah refers to prayer, since the word forms the acrostic of 90 amenim, 4 kedushos, 100 brachos and 5 chumashim. This is also alluded to in Mishlei (14:34), "Tzedakah uplifts a nation."

### Why Did the Sages Greet the Early Morning by David Hamelech?

In his work `Benayahu' (Berachos 3b), the Ben Ish Chai explains the words of the gemara which tells how the Sages of his generation used to gather by David Hamelech at sunrise and would say to him: "Your Jewish people need parnassah." Why did they come at the crack of dawn? The answer lies in a pasuk in Tehillim (17:15): "I Will Behold Your Face in Righteousness [צדק]." Because David used to give tzedakah before praying, the Sages came to him and said, "Very nice: now practice what you preach. Know that your people need livelihood. Open up your treasure vaults and support them."

### As Practiced by Gedolei Yisrael

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz used to receive all the poor of his city, men, women and children of all social levels, and would stand by his threshold and distribute charity very graciously from his own holy hands. As if this was not enough, he also suffered the jibes and curses from some of these very people who felt he was not generous enough or simply grumble without reason, as well, simply because they were embittered. Not only did he not answer

them back but would increase his donation towards them, again very genially (Kovetz Bechatzros Hachaim' 16, p. 54, in the name of Shefa Chaim').

His grandson, the Shefa Chaim of Sanz, used to hand over all the monies that had come his way during the previous evening to his shammash, monies that his Chassidim had given him as a pidyon or for distribution, and would give the shammash detailed guidelines on how to distribute that money: part of it for yeshivos, for chadorim, refugees, needy brides and so on. Only after he had dispensed all of the money in his possession would he allow himself to begin his preparations for the morning prayers.

One of his close followers told of the time when the Shefa Chaim had already begun praying but found himself unable to proceed. He roused himself and tried to begin praying once more but felt unable to concentrate his thoughts.

"We looked at him in surprise, not understanding what could possibly be disturbing the Rebbe. Suddenly, we saw him rise from his seat and begin shaking out his pockets. He checked them one after another until a small coin, a quarter, fell out. Only after setting it aside in a tzedakah pushke was he able to begin praying with his usual fervor."

Only without having any hindrance from all money in his possession which, according to his practice should be set aside for tzedakah, was he free to pray without any restraints ("Lapid Haeish' Vol. 2, p 606).

### Some Laws Pertaining to Giving Charity Before Praying

The practice of giving tzedakah before davening is, in fact, one of the laws of prayer, as the Rambam states (Matnos Aniyim 10:15), "The great chachomim used to give a coin to a poor person before every tefillah and only afterwards would they begin davening, according to what is written, 'I Will Behold Your Face in Righteousness [צדק]'."

The Shulchan Aruch writes in the laws of tefillah (Orach Chaim 92:10), "It is good to give tzedakah before praying." The Mishne Brurah (S"K 36) brings the custom of many communities to give charity when reaching 'Vayevarech David' by the pasuk, 'V'Ata moshel bakol'. It adds that the practice of collecting charity in some shuls during the reading of the Torah is not correct because it distracts the worshippers from hearing

the Torah being read and even answering to its blessings.

The Shelah Hakadosh (Rinmzei Osiyos 369) brings that the Ari Hakadosh was accustomed in Eretz Yisrael not to allow the collection of tzedakah from the congregating during the repetition of the shemoneh esrei, but rather during 'Vayevarech David', so as not to disturb the people from hearing the blessings and properly answering to them.

Giving charity before prayers does not necessitate actually giving a coin to a beggar. The Shefa Chaim once said to his followers, "Before davening, a person should not study [Torah] by himself but with a learning partner or a student/s, since even this is considered a form of charity to a poor person before praying" ('Lapid Haeish' Vol. 2 p 606).

R' Eisik Sher once said to his disciples: "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu sends a beggar to a person in the morning before he davens so that he can fulfill the verse, 'Va'ani betzedek echezeh panecha,' he should give the pauper double of what he usually gives, one time to fulfill the mitzvah of charity itself and an additional portion to acknowledge the favor that the poor man does to him by providing the opportunity at the right time and providing wholesomeness to his soul (Kovetz Beis Hillel', shana 3, Kovetz Gimmel, p. 73).

### Amen in our Parsha

It is told that the Divrei Chaim of Sanz once noticed a man reciting the morning blessings alone, without anyone standing nearby to answer 'Amen' to each one. He called him over and said, "In the beginning of Parshas Re'e'h (11:27) it is written, '...the blessing which you shall hear/obey to the commandments of Hashem.' This can imply that blessings should be said in a manner that others can hear and answer 'Amen' to them. This should not be taken lightly, either, since it is included in "the commandments of Hashem" (Ateres Chaim' p. 103).

It can also be added that the word 'es' form the initials of 'Amen Sa'aneh - You shall answer 'Amen'. By answering Amen, you shall merit the blessing, as the Zohar states (Vayelech 285). Answering Amen enriches a person with many blessings and goodness (HaRav Gamliel Rabinowitz, author of 'Gam Ani Odcha').

## Tales of Emunim:

## A story about Amen and Prayer

### Preceding Gemilas Chassodim to Tefillah

The Tzemach Tzedek used to be visited every morning by his late grandfather-mentor, the Baal haTanya, who had passed away many years before, sometimes while he was awake and sometimes in a dream. The Tzemach Tzedek would pose all of his doubts and questions in both the revealed and mystic Torah and the grandfather would reply to each question, one by one.

One night, the Tzemach Tzedek was sitting in his room, studying intently as if it was the middle of the day. Many questions flooded his mind and they increased by the hour, some of them requiring immediate attention. How he wished he could be visited by his grandfather already, but to his dismay, he had not seen him now for several days, which caused him much pain.

Early the next morning, he went to pray in the shul of his father-in-law, the 'Middle Rebbe'. On his way there, he met Reb Mordechai Eliyahu, a simple but pious man who dealt with cattle in the market. That day happened to be market day and Reb Mordechai needed a loan of some cash for his day's dealings. Upon meeting the Tzemach Tzedek, his eyes lit up, and he approached him for a day's loan of several rubles so that he could buy and sell that day. "I would be happy to help you," said the Tzemach Tzedek, "but I am on my way to shul now and don't have my purse with me. If you can wait until I return and then come to my house, I will be very glad to help you."

As soon as the Tzemach Tzedek entered the shul, he was suddenly reminded of the story of Chazal and R' Elazar's practice of giving tzedakah to a poor man before beginning to daven.

He was also struck by another teaching of R' Elazar who said, 'An act of chessed is greater than giving charity.' He thought to himself: Maybe I didn't do the proper thing by putting off Reb Mordechai Eliyahu's re-

quest for a loan.

He turned around and headed for his home, took out the sum of money from his desk drawer and went off to the market in search of Reb Mordechai Eliyahu. Meanwhile, the market had begun filling up with people and he had a hard time locating the cattle dealer. After a long search, he finally found him and ran towards him, gave him the money, and went back to shul to begin davening.

As soon as he had put on his tallis and tefillin, the Baal haTanya appeared to him, his face fallow. He said to his grandson, "Know that performing an act of kindness wholeheartedly, without any personal interests, but doing a favor out of love, as is commanded in the Torah, 'Ve'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocho...' serves to open up the heavenly gates so that one's prayers can be heard."

At a later date, when the Tzemach Tzedek told this incident over to his son, he added, "Think about it - helping a Jew with his livelihood, even if only through a loan which will not bring a profit to him of more than seventy kopekes by enabling him to buy another calf, acts to

open before him the gates of all the upper palaces and makes his prayers bear fruit!

(Darkei Hachassidus' Vayera).

שתחדש עלינו את החודש הזה  
לטובה ולברכה

אלו"ל

לברכה ולא לקללה - אמת

לחיים ולא למות - אמת

לשובע ולא לרוזן - אמת

(מן אברהם [למגיד מטריסק], וזאת הברכה)

On the threshold of this upcoming month of mercy and forgiveness,

Let us resolve to recite the morning blessings every day with a partner.

Thus, with a small effort, more and more 'Amen's will be added to each one's credit, And these will surely weigh down the balance in our favor for the upcoming Judgment.

A small investment – a great return.