

And All Believe

A Weekly Leaflet from the House of "Bnei Emunim"



PARSHAS KI SEITZEI

In the Pathways of Emunim:

Amen and Prayer in this Parsha

MODEH ANI

Who is the real debtor?

The commandment of returning a mashkon-security appears twice in our parsha - once as a positive commandment and another time as a prohibition. The second form states: "If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his mashkon in your possession" (24:12). The positive form states: "You shall surely return him his pledge when the sun goes down that he may sleep with his garment and bless you, and it shall be a righteousness before Hashem your G-d" (ibid 13).

The commandment of returning a pledge symbolizes the purity of character traits demanded of our people at every step of life, even when we are engaged in an act of chessed. Thus, even if a person is doing his friend a favor and has lent him money in his time of need in exchange for a security-deposit, he is required to return it to him whenever that friend needs it; if it be a day garment, he must make sure the other has it to wear during the day, and if it is a night time covering, he must make it available to him when the sun sets.

Chazal provided a wonderful reason for this in the Midrash (Tanchuma, Mishpatim 16): "Hashem says to Man: 'How much do you owe Me? You sin before me and I wait for you. Your soul reports to me every night with an accounting, and even if it is found wanting, I return it to you. As for you, even if he [your neighbor] is indebted to you, 'Return [his pledge] to him by sunset'."

The Chofetz Chaim pursued this line in his introduction to 'Ahavas Chessed' (Nesiv Hachessed Os 5), explaining Rashi's commentary on the words (24:10): "When you lend your friend anything..." - even a negligible debt. This gives cause to wonder. We would understand this commandment better if the Torah was talking about a large debt of hundreds of dinarim, if even then, one would be obligated to return the pledge. Why, then, did Rashi choose the opposite and speak about 'a negligible debt'?

He explains that Rashi's intent was to hint at the above mentioned words of Chazal, where even if your friend owes you a very large debt, it should be regarded as if it were nothing compared to the huge debt you owe Hashem for your very life, which is entrusted in His hands, all the more so in the case that you have sinned more than once. If, in spite of this, Hashem restores your soul to you every morning, how much more must you be obliged to return the pledge to your friend, measure for measure!

In Your Hand Do I Entrust my Spirit

Indeed does Hashem perform for us a wonderful act of chessed each day by restoring to us our souls after it has been in His safekeeping all night long. Go and see what the Zohar Hakadosh wrote (Bamidbar 119:1) on the verse in Tehillim (31:6): "In Your hands do I entrust my spirit; You have redeemed me Hashem, G-d of Truth." Man is given a taste of death every night when his soul ascends to Heaven. It is only through Hashem's kindness and loyalty that He restores our soul to us as a minor form of resurrection of the dead.

That being so, it is not strange why Chazal established a special prayer of thanks for this great chessed which opens the day: 'Modeh Ani. This is the very first utterance of the day: "I give thanks to You, O King, Who lives and endures, Who has mercifully restored my soul unto me: great is Your faithfulness."

Why is it important for us to thank Hashem for His restoring our soul immediately upon awakening from a night's sleep?

The Chofetz Chaim explained this by way of a parable: A man had a satchel full of cash, besides a purse with some more money. One time, he needed to travel far away

and wished to leave his money by a good friend.

He first brought the large satchel and was deliberating whether to leave the purse by him as well, and finally, decided against it, fearing that the friend might not keep a vigil eye on that small item. His friend mocked him and said, "Fool! If you already trust me with your large bag, why don't you trust me with the small purse as well?"

Thus it is with us. Don't we entrust our most precious possession - our soul - each day with Hashem, knowing for sure that He will return it to us? Why, then, don't we rely on Him to provide us with whatever we lack during the day and trust and believe that He will do so? (Chofetz Chaim, Nesivos Hatefillah p. 33)

The word 'modeh' -- aside from its obvious meaning of expressing thanks to Hashem for His returning our soul to us, also incorporates an additional meaning of acknowledging Hashem's great kindnesses. We do not say "for having returned to us" as we say in Modim, but more directly - 'for returning it'. In other words: I acknowledge before You that You are the One Who returned my soul to me (commentary on 'Derech Chaim', Machon Yerushalayim Publication, note 1393, according to the Pachad Yitzchak, Chanukah Essay II).

For Having Mercifully Restored in Me My Soul

We express a unique praise in this concise prayer through the word 'bechemlah', with mercy. What is the meaning of this mercy? The Gra says that this expression of mercy is different from the other forms of rachamim in that it usually follows anger. When the soul ascends to Heaven each night and stands before the Heavenly Throne, Hashem cleanses it from its pollution of sins, which should surely arouse anger against the person. But if, in spite of our sins, Hashem restores our soul to us, He must have utilized a special measure of chemlah - mercy ('Tallelei Oros' I, p. 13, quoted from 'Torah Ohr').

A fascinating incident which can highlight an additional significance of this prayer took place in an international congress which was attended by hundreds of top scientists from all over the world involved in brain research. Among the topics discussed there was the problem that disturbed a large portion of the world population - that of fainting upon arising from bed. Among the speakers addressing this problem was Professor L. McMaron from England who reported her findings on a study of this subject.

According to her research, it takes about twelve seconds for one's body to resume its active state after sleeping. If a person goes from a lying position to a standing one immediately upon awakening, his blood is sent to the brain very rapidly, which is the cause for fainting. The professor advised every person not to jump out of bed right away but to count slowly to twelve and then get up.

The audience found this very interesting. And then, a distinguished professor, an observant Jew, stood up and told the audience that "By us Jews, we have an ancient custom of saying a short prayer of thanks to the Creator for His enabling us to wake up hale and hearty.

"This prayer, recited upon awakening, while still lying in bed," he noted, "has exactly twelve words and saying it meaningfully takes a full twelve seconds." He actually read the text before the astonished audience, slowly and eloquently - "Modeh Ani..." ('Borchi Nafshi' Vol. III p. 620).

And Your Faithfulness By Night

The Modeh Ani prayer concludes with the words "Rabba emunasecha - Great is Your faithfulness." The Zohar explains these words (Zohar Chadash, Bereishis 31b) that

Hashem is trustworthy and faithful towards the 'securities' deposited by Him. When a pledge is deposited by someone, there is no guarantee that he will return it to the owner, especially if that person owes him money. But one can surely rely upon Hashem to return our precious pledge entrusted to Him, even if we are in debt.

These words also bear testimony to Hashem's trustworthiness regarding techiyas hameisim, since this promise is given support and validity from the very fact that it happens every morning. When a person is asleep, he is practically dead, as Chazal said: Sleep is one sixtieth of death. And if Hashem restores a person's soul to him each morning, it is a form of resurrection. This is also the meaning of the pasuk (Eichah 3:23), "Renewed each morning, great is Your faithfulness." Our belief in techiyas hameisim is reinforced each morning with our awakening (Commentary of the Rokeach, Elokai Neshama: see also Yalkut Shimoni Remez 1001).

Yet another level of understanding to these words can be learned from a story told by R' Yechezkel Abramsky zt"l from his difficult years in Siberia: "There were times that when I awoke in the morning, the cold was so fierce that I was sure I was about to die. This suffering was aside from the slave labor and other tribulations. One such morning, I got out of bed, murmuring the Modeh Ani prayer. Suddenly, I was struck by an arrogant thought: 'What am I being so thankful about, anyway? That Hashem gave me back my soul? Maybe I would have been better off had He kept it by him! Under these circumstances of cold, hunger and pain, I would be better off dead!'

"But when I came to the words 'rabbah emunasecha', I had second thoughts. I said to myself, 'Perhaps all of this suffering is worth being able to live one more day of pure faith in Hashem, one more day

of life in the shadow of Hashem's wings, knowing for certainty that there is No One Besides Him.'"

R' Elya Lopian zt"l, the famous Mashgiach, once commented on the pasuk, "Lehaggid baboker... To tell of Your kindness in the morning and of Your faithfulness by night. Who is the person who merits telling of Hashem's 'kindness in the morning', to actually experience Hashem's lovingkindness in the future? One who has believed in 'Your faithfulness by night.' One who, even in the darkness of the bitter exile has lived with faith and trust that everything that happens to him emanates from Hashem Who knows what is good for the nation as a whole and for the individual as well ('Ohel Moshe' par. Beshalach).

Amen in the Parshah

The mitzvah of tzitzis is mentioned in this parshah. "You shall make fringes for you on the four corners of the garment with which you cover yourself" (22:12). We can find a fascinating connection between this mitzvah and that of answering 'Amen'. The fringes are made from four strings which are doubled to from eight. Amen is the numerical value of Hashem's Name as it is written and pronounced: Havaya and Ado..., each of which has four letters. By answering 'Amen', Hashem's Name is unified, just like the strings of the tzitzis, which number eight. One can add that the eight strings also allude to the eight 'Amen's of the Kaddish 'Al Yisrael' (according to the Sefardi custom), which add up to the numerical value of 'tash koah' - rendered helpless. This comes to teach that by reciting the Kaddish, as well as by keeping the mitzvah of tzitzis which hints at the 613 commandments, we are weakening the Force of Evil ('Keren l'David - B'Nefesh David' Os 55).

Tales of Emunim:

A story about Amen and Prayer

The Error

The unforgettable Rav of Ofakim, R' Shimshon Pincus zt"l, told a wonderful parable describing the importance of beginning the day with 'Modeh Ani'.

R' Reuven was a new immigrant, in every sense of the term. Half a year had passed from the day he had moved from a well appointed private house on the West Coast which was part of a vibrant Jewish community.

A deep love for Eretz Yisrael had prompted him to make the decisive move but he executed it on the spur of the moment without taking into account the difficulties he would encounter in absorption into a new country. Money did not stand in the way of his purchasing a large home in a flourishing chareidi Jerusalem community, with plenty left over to buy a car for the family needs. His biggest problem was the language barrier.

He had no close relatives in Israel and didn't know anyone outside of Reb Shimon, a distant relative who befriended him and opened his house to him. His family graciously adopted the new immigrants, trying to make the transition as pleasant as possible.

It was about half a year after their arrival that R' Reuven found a white envelope in the mailbox. Full of curiosity, he opened it up to find an invitation to the wedding of his new friend's youngest daughter, scheduled to take place two weeks hence in Bnei Brak. This would be the family's first visit to this city.

The day finally arrived and the family got into the car and made their way out of Jerusalem. After driving and driving but not getting any nearer to his destination, R' Reuven concluded that he was lost. The road signs confused him all the more. He eventually found himself, two hours later, at the outskirts of the southern village of Mitze Ramon. It was already late and with no one in sight to ask for directions, he

decided to return to Jerusalem.

A few days later, he received the expected phone call: his friend, Reb Shimon, asked politely why he hadn't attended the wedding. Mr. Reuven apologized profusely and described the abortive trip and how he had ended up in Mitze Ramon.

"I'm so sorry to hear about," said Reb Shimon, "but you can make up for it by coming to Shabbos Sheva Brachos."

R' Shimshon asks: Now what would have happened had Reb Reuven made a white lie and said that he had thought the wedding was supposed to take place in Mitze Ramon? Reb Shimon would have been very angry and asked why he hadn't checked the invitation before leaving.

And now for the lesson: Throughout our day, we make many mistakes. If these are unintentional, they can be forgiven, but if we sin out of stupidity and ignorance, because of a lack of knowledge of what is expected of us, we can surely be taken to task - you should have checked it out beforehand!

It is therefore important for us to begin our day with the declaration that should come to remind us before Whom

we stand and before Whom we are expected to give a reckoning, so that we will know how to navigate our day as befits the servants of the King of kings!

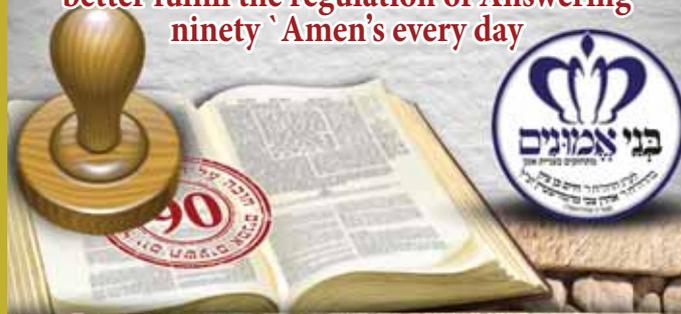
כל יום - תענה צ' אמנים

Dear Fellow Jew!

Did You Know?

- Chazal said (*Tikkun Zohar II 83a*) that a person is obligated to answer ninety 'Amen's a day This regulation was halachically determined (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 6 4; Mishne Berurah 13*).
- One who answers ninety 'Amen's a day is protected from all *mazikim* (*Midbar Kedumos I 33*).
- The only valid 'Amen's are those said in response to a *bracha* (*Responsa Rema of Pano Ziman 109, Mishne Berura ibid*)

Make sure to recite the morning blessings with a partner Thus will you also be able to better fulfill the regulation of Answering ninety 'Amen's every day



AMEN - A SMALL INVESTMENT WITH A BIG DIVIDEND