

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

PARASHAS BEHAR

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Keeping Shabbos Solely L'Shem Shamayim

"ושבתה הארץ שבת לה" (כה, ב)

Rashi explains the words "Shabbos l'Hashem": "L'Shem Hashem, as it says in Shabbos Bereishis." This needs to be explained.

Harav Yaakov Yosef Ginz, the Rav of Bessermin, explains: The custom of taking a rest on Shabbos and during the year of *shemittah* can also be explained in logical terms. A person, and the land, should get the rest they need to rejuvenate, and therefore, even nations of the world have chosen a day of rest as a reprieve from their work.

However, we Jews are instructed to look away from all the other reasons and to keep Shabbos, and to do so only "l'Shem Hashem" as Rashi wrote. For this reason, we never see a non-Jew be *moser nefesh* to rest on his day of rest, and by contrast, tens of thousands of Yidden have been *moser nefesh* over the generations in order to keep Shabbos. That's because the non-Jews rest just for the sake of resting, while we do so in order to uphold the decree of Hashem.

Bearing this in mind, we can explain the words in *Minchah* of Shabbos: "Your children should recognize and know that from You is their rest," because the Jews recognize the fact that their rest on Shabbos is because it is ordered by Hashem, "and upon their rest they will sanctify Your Name." Therefore they sanctify the Name of Hashem and are *moser nefesh* for their rest.

Harei BaShamayim

Do Not Be Deceitful in Yiras Shamayim

"ולא תנו איש את עמיתו ויראת מאלקיך" (כה, ז)

It is not for naught that the Torah links the prohibition of *hona'ah*, deception, with the commandment of "And you should fear Hashem." It comes to teach us that regarding matters of *Yiras Shamayim*, as well, a person must not deceive his friend. Harav Moshe of Savran, ז"ל, would daven with great fervor when he came to his Rebbe, Harav Baruch of Mezhibuzh. Once, the Shpoler Zeide, ז"ל, remarked to him, "Young man, you should know that the *passuk* warns us, 'Velo sonu...and you should fear Hashem,' you have to be careful not to deceive those around you and to make them think that you are G-d fearing." In time, Rav Moshe related that this short remark hit him very deeply and transformed his *avodas Hashem*.

Likutei Shoshanim

Blessed is the Man Who Trusts Hashem

"ואיש כי לא יהיה לו גאל והשיגה ידו ומצא כדי גאלתו" (כה, כו)

Harav Chaim Weitz, a disciple of the *Minchas Chinuch*:

The way of the world is that when a person needs help, first he puts his faith in his friends and relatives to help him, and only if they fail does he cry out to his Father in Heaven. By contrast, one who does not have a relative and redeemer immediately puts his faith in his Creator.

That is the type of person the Torah is hinting to here; because he does not have a redeemer and does not put his faith in other human beings, he is guaranteed to somehow find redemption.

The *passuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 17: 5-7) says similarly: "Cursed is the man that trusts in man...blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem..."

Likutei Chaim

Including a Golem in a Minyan

"לעולם בהם תעבדו" (כה, מז)

In *Maseches Brachos* (47b) the Gemara relates that when Rabi Eliezer entered the shul and a tenth man was missing for a *minyan*, he stood up and freed his Canaanite slave so that he could join as a tenth. The Gemara asked: did he not violate the mitzvah of "l'olam bahem tavodu, he remains forever as a slave"? And the answer is: because it was a "mitzvah derabbim, a mitzvah for the

The Land is Blessed in the Merit of Amen

"ונתנה הארץ פריה ואכלתם לשבע ושבתם לבטח עליה"

(כה, יט)

The acronym of "venasna ha'aretz piryah" is numerically equivalent to 91—or amen, to hint to us that if we are careful about responding amen with *kavanah*, we are guaranteed to have bread to be able to eat our fill and to dwell securely in our land.

Daas Moshe

public," it was permitted.

An inference to this can be found in the *sefer Mishkenos Yisrael*, on this *parashah*: The acronym of "l'olam bahem" is "leshachrer eved letzorech minyan bebeis haknesses – mutar, releasing a slave for a *minyan* in shul is permitted."

Harav Ephraim Zalman Margulies, author of *Bais Ephraim*, related: As I child I debated with my father the question (see *Mishnah Berurah* 56:4) of whether one may include a *golem* created according to the *Sefer Hayetzirah* in a *minyan*? I presented this story to my father as proof and claimed that that if it was possible, why did Rabi Eliezer transgress a *mitzvah aseh*? A *mekubal* as great as he certainly could have created a *golem* for this purpose, and the fact that he did not do so proves that a *golem* is not suitable for a *minyan*. My father praised me for this explanation.

Maalos Hayochsin, Hosafos Chadashos 1

If Like Sons, If Like Slaves

"כי לי בני ישראל עבדים עבדיהם" (כה, נה)

In *Maseches Bava Basra* (10a) the Gemara brings the *passuk* (*Devarim* 14:1): "Banim, sons are you to Hashem Elokeichem." This seems to contradict this *passuk*. The Gemara then explains: When Am Yisrael does the will of Hashem, then they are called "banim, sons," and when they do not do the will of Hashem, they are called slaves. This needs to be clarified. If they do not fulfill Hashem's will, what is it that makes them like slaves?

However, if we take a closer look at what Chazal say, we will see that they did not say "when they transgress Hashem's mitzvos", but rather "when they do not carry out His will." This can be explained as referring to those people who perform the *mitzvos* only because they have no choice, but they evade fulfilling their obligations in *mitzvos* that they can avoid doing, even though performing them will certainly bring *nachas* to their Creator.

This behavior is similar to that of a slave who does everything only in order to fulfill his obligations, but not of a son, who, out of love for his father, wants to bring him more pleasure than he has to. That is what Chazal meant when they say, "when they do the will of the Creator," we are called sons, and if not we are called slaves.

Tosefes Brachah

An example of this mitzvah is replying amen. A person is not obligated to make his *brachos* in front of others to answer, but there is an advantage to it, because amen completes the *brachah* (*Darchei Moshe, Orach Chaim* 167), and if we always try to make our *brachos* in front of others so they can say amen, this will surely bring us closer to being Hashem's sons and not only His slaves.

Rashbi writes in the holy Zohar (Tikkunim 40 a):

One who answers amen with all his might will have the words of the *passuk* (*Yeshaya* 58:9) "az tikra v'Hashem yaanehi" fulfilled. The hint to this is that if "az tikra," the word "az" hints to the eight letters that comprise the Names of Hashem, the *Shem Havayah*, and the *Shem Adnus*, and together, they are numerically equivalent to amen, and then, "Hashem will reply" and all the terrible decrees will be annulled.

As the yahrtzeit of Rashbi approaches, let us all strengthen ourselves in responding amen, and thus we will merit that Hashem will answer our tefillos and rescind any difficult decrees. Amen.

Hotz gepoilt ales gut!



אז
תקרא
וה'
יענה
(ישעיה נח ט)

Continuation of L'Olam Yehei Adam

In this segment we will continue to explain the *tefillah* of L'Olam Yehei Adam. After speaking of the attributes of a person who fears Hashem both covertly and openly, we continue to detail additional obligations that a person who fears Hashem must adhere to:

Admission of Truth as a Condition for Tefillah

The Mashgiach, Harav Yechezkel Levinstein, zt"l, said: In the *Midrash (Shemos Rabba 7:4)*, Chazal said that the same way the praise of Hashem rises from the mouths of the *tzaddikim* in Gan Eden, so too, it rises from the mouths of evil in Gehinnom, as they shed tears like water until they cool the fire of the Gehinnom with their tears and say to HaKadosh Baruch Hu: 'You have said nicely, You have judged nicely....'

We learn from here how much Hashem wants us to be *modeh al ha'emes*, to admit to the truth, because that elevates His Name even higher. That is what we say in davening: "A person should always be...speaking the truth in his heart," that he should admit to the truth of the Creator and recognize the fact that without Him, the person has nothing, and that all his requests during davening are not a demand, but rather pleading for compassion from Hashem.

Admitting the truth is a vital introduction to *tefillah*, because someone who begins to daven while still thinking that he is right, and that he deserves everything, is lying, as it says (*Tehillim 101:7*): "He will not dwell within My house; he who practices deceit, who speaks lies, will not be established before My eyes." But someone who recognizes and understands and knows that everything he receives is *bechessed* and not *bedin*, then he is worthy of having his *tefillah* answered. (*Ohr Yechezkel*, Vol. VII, p. 124; 218)

He Should Arise and Say

This wording of "*meh anu meh chayeinu*, what are we and what are our lives" is said during *Tefillas Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur. The Chasam Sofer (*Al HaTorah, Kedoshim*) explains that the source for saying it is the Gemara (*Niddah 30b*) that before he is born a person is sworn to: "Be a *tzaddik* and do not be a *rasha*, and even if the whole world tells you that you are a *tzaddik*, you should be in your own eyes like a *rasha*. And you should know that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is pure and His servants are pure, and the soul that He placed in you is pure, and if you preserve its purity – good, and if not, I will take it away from you."

The reason that we say this during *Ne'ilah*, as Yom Kippur comes to an end, is because that is the time when a person's heart is broken from the fast and the praying, and he is able to say things with full truthfulness, which is not the case in the morning, when his heart is not yet broken and he sometimes says things that are not entirely from the heart.

There is even a greater praise for a person who speaks so truthfully from his heart, that already upon arising, he can affirm this oath with the absolute recognition of his nothingness, and therefore, we emphasize in the *nusach* of our *tefillos* every day: "*Vayashkem vayomer*," and he arises and says—and should not wait until *Ne'ilah*, he should always be completely truthful.

The Kretschiner Rebbe, zt"l, adds: Why do we emphasize "*vayashkem*," and he got up? Because for a person who slept deeply all night, woke up late and davened without any advance preparation, it is no surprise that he says "what are we and what are our lives?" The surprise is that even a person who arose early and prepared himself for *tefillah* for a long time, and then approaches *tefillah* with the right frame of mind, also has to recognize "what are we and what are our lives...and the advantage of a person over an animal is nothing." He should *chalilah* not begin davening out of *gaavah*, pride. (*Beis Simchah*, Vol. II, 645)

The Advantage Of a Person Over an Animal is Nothing

The Ramban, in his *drashos* on *Megillas Koheles* (36) wonders: How can we determine that "the advantage of a person over an animal is nothing"? There are many pious people who have reached very elevated levels, and they are like *baalei bris* of Hashem, like Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?

He explained: we are not referring here to the *neshamah*, the soul, which certainly can rise to great heights. Rather, it refers to the body, that the person's body does not have any advantages over that of the animal, because even an elevated person cannot benefit his body and ultimately will die and return to the earth, like an animal.

To this we add: "But we Your Nation the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov..." We can raise ourselves like them above the restraints of our body and cleave to the Shechinah with the power of *mitzvos* and good deeds. Thus, even if our body does not leave any remnant in this world, our soul will continue to illuminate for generations to come."

The *Siddur Maggid Tzedek* explains that certainly there is an advantage to a person over an animal, and that is the "*ayin* (with an aleph)" whose acronym is "*aval yesh neshamah*," but there is a soul. The advantage of a person over an animal is the holy soul that dwells within each person that has the power to raise him to great heights.

The Humility of the Tzemach Tzaddik

The Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz, zt"l, related a story: One Shavuus, my holy forbear, the Tzemach Tzaddik, entered the shul and immediately said and said with tremendous humility, "I look around me and see that there is no creature in the world as low as me. I don't have a share in this world nor in the next world. In this world, Jews come to me all day to complain about their difficult straits, this one has disease in his herd, the child of another is sick and a third can't eke out a living. Only a heart of stone would not crack at hearing so many troubles among our brethren! So how can I enjoy this world?!"

"In the next world as well: at every opportunity I deliver *divrei Torah* to Yidden. They write things down in a *sefer* and after 120 years they surely will print them. Then someone will come and buy it, and then on Shabbos he will put it on his table so that his table should be a "*bassis ledavar mutar*," so he can move the table. There, in the World to Come, they will chastise me and say, "Is it so that through you *sefer*, the table becomes a *bassis* for something permitted?"

The Rebbe concluded: "If I do not have this world or the next, then let us at least daven in a worthy fashion!" And then he began to daven fervently.

The elder Chassidim pointed out to me, the Imrei Chaim concluded, that they had never experienced such a *tefillah* in their lives. The enthusiasm was so great that even the large light fixtures in the *bais medrash* swayed. From time to time, the Tzemach Tzaddik would ask, "How much time has passed since that *tefillah*?" (*Knesses Yisrael*, p. 56)

Blessed Is He Who Decrees and Fulfills

Harav Eliezer Zusia Portugal, the Skulener Rebbe, zt"l, was renowned for his fiery *ahavas Yisrael*. It came to the point of *mesirus nefesh* in the period following World War Two, when he established the renowned Chessed L'Avraham organization, through which thousands of people were helped materially and spiritually and which provided aid to the Holocaust survivors and refugees.

The Rebbe was especially devoted to survivor children. When the war was over, he began to collect children, and he and his Rebbeztin ultimately adopted some four hundred refugee children, caring for all their material and spiritual needs.

The close bond between the Rebbe and his "children" is indicated in the words he wrote to them in his will: "Remember that I was devoted to you from the moment I met you. There was no one who loved you who was closer to you, physically, monetarily.... Almost every day, morning and night, I made sure to see if you'd already eaten, drank and the like. I also hired teachers and paid them well to illuminate your eyes in Torah and to guide you on the right path."

The Rebbe's *mesirus nefesh* for Yiddishkeit did not begin only after the war. Many years earlier, he was already *moser nefesh* to draw Jews closer to their Father in Heaven. He related this story to one of his close confidantes, Reb Kalman Drebin, years later:

When I was a young married man, I worked to draw the Jews of Romania, young and old, closer to Hashem. Among other things, I tried to persuade young men not to enlist in the Romanian army. I knew that enlistment was equivalent to a complete cutoff from a Jewish life, and there would be no way back for them. I persuaded them instead to go learn Torah in a yeshiva, a step that would certainly help them remain loyal to Hashem and their heritage.

Hashgachah ordained it that one day, I woke up to a loud pounding at the door. Two burly police officers stood there, and before I could utter a word they cuffed my hands and feet and led me to jail.

Apparently, someone had informed the authorities that there was someone by the name of Eliezer Portugal who was persuading young men not to enlist in the army and even guided them how they could evade the draft. The authorities corroborated the report and ordered me arrested.

My situation was dismal. They treated me like the worst criminal, imprisoning me in a dirty, dark cell myself. They even took away my yarmulke and my glasses.

I am weak by nature, the Rebbe related, and while I lay on that stone floor, hardly breathing the stuffy, moldy air, I believed my end was near.

Over the next few days I lost all concept of time. I had no idea how long I would be locked up like this, and the only people I had contact with—my jailers—did everything they could to convince me that my chances of going free were nil.

I had no *sefarim* or any other form of occupation and I was afraid I'd lose my mind from boredom, so I resolved to invest as much time as I could davening.

I covered my head with my shirt and began to sing the *tefillos*. I davened slowly, emotionally and very fervently. I weighed every word, I recited every *tefillah* with tremendous awe and deep *kavanah*.

Then I reached the *tefillah* of *Baruch Sheamar*, which includes many praises of Hashem and His Greatness and Glory.

When I reached the phrase "*baruch Gozer Umekayem*" I fell silent, and the question rose in my mind: All the other praises in this *tefillah* describe the positive aspects of the constant *Hashgachas Hashem*, such as "*Baruch Merachem al Haaretz*," and blessed is He who pays reward to those who fear Him. But these words seemed to be out of context, because at first glance, the word *gezeirah*, decree, appears to express a negative act.

How had I not thought about this earlier?! I thought to myself miserably. Was it possible that for years I had davened such an important *tefillah* without *kavanah*? The thought caused me much pain and I decided that I would not continue davening until I found an answer to my question.

I repeated the words over and over again, trying to come up with a reasonable answer, and suddenly the understanding illuminated my mind and filled me with joy:

The word "*mekayem*" has two meanings. The first is to carry out or fulfill. But there is another meaning, and that is "*machazik venosen koach*, to sustain and give strength." Now the praise is clear: even when Hashem decrees difficult things on a person, He also gives the person the strength to withstand them and tolerate them, and to continue on, and therefore we praise Hashem by saying "blessed is He who decrees and gives the strength to withstand."

This thought was like cool water on a parched soul for me, and I felt like Hashem had sent me this though in order to light up the times ahead, so that I should know that even in difficult straits, Hashem is infusing me with the energy to withstand the situation.

From that moment on, my thoughts changed. I turned the despair into the strongest faith that within a short time, I would be released. Indeed, a few days later, I was set free. Each year on the day of the release, the Rebbe would gather those who were close to him and told them what happened that day. He would repeat the wondrous explanation of "*gozer umekayem*" and share how it encouraged him not to break down even in the most despondent situations. With the power of *emunah*, one can withstand all the *gezeiros* of Hashem and accept them with love.

(*Yalkut Lekach Tov*, p. 240)