

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

PARASHAS KEDOSHIM

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Looking Into the Siddur Rectifies What We See

“אל תפנו אל האילים ואלהי מסכה לע תעשו לכם” (יט, ד)

Harav Menachem Mendel of Strikov said: It is known that everything a person sees is ingrained deeply into his heart, as it says (Bamidbar 15:39) “And do not stray after your hearts and after your eyes.” Rashi there explains, “The eye sees and the heart desires and the body carries out the sins.” Therefore, the Torah warns us, “Don’t turn to the idols,” because even if one only turns to look at the idols, he may deteriorate, *chalilah*, to the point of “v’elohei maseichah lo saasu lachem.”

The Rebbe, z”l, derives strong *mussar* from this: Knowing how great the influence of what one sees is on the person’s soul, it is incumbent upon the person to regulate himself to look at good things. Because he encounters so many negative sights each day, it is worthy that at least during davening, he should keep his eyes on the holy letters in the *Siddur*, because there is no doubt that seeing the letters will influence his soul and will help turn his heart for the good.

Biyeshishim Chochmah, p. 85

Preempt the Trouble with a Korban

“וכי תזבחו זבח שלמים לה' לרצונכם תזבחוהו” (יט, ה)

Why does the *passuk* emphasize with the word “*lirtzonchem*”, for your will?

Harav Shlomo Kluger, z”l, explains: Normally, after a person experiences trouble, he pledges a *korban* [and in our time, there are *tefillos* instead of *korbanos* (Taanis 26b)], so that the merit should help the person be spared from that trouble. Hence, it emerges that the person is ‘forced, *anuss*’ to pledge that *korban*.

Thus the Torah teaches us, “And if you bring a *zevach shlamim* to Hashem for your will you should sacrifice it.” Don’t wait for a time of trouble, because the *korban* and the *tefillah* that are the most effective are those that come from your own will, and not because you are compelled to do it, as Chazal said (Sanhedrin 44b) “A person should always preempt trouble with *tefillah*.”

Imrei Shefer

So That We Should Cease Stealing

“לא תעשק את רעך ולא תגזול” (יט, ג)

Many wonder about the fact that specifically at the most elevated, lofty moments of the year, during *Tefillas Ne’ilah*, we ask “*l’maan nechdal mei’oshek yadeinu*.” Aren’t there countless sins that we must ask forgiveness for? Why do we choose specifically this one?

The Mahara”m Schiff (end of *Maseches Baba Kama*) cites the Gemara (Sanhedrin 108a) that the decree of the generation of the Mabal was sealed only because they began to steal, and therefore, we can derive that specifically at the time of *Ne’ilah*,

when the decrees are being sealed, it’s a good time to daven that we not steal, so that our decrees should not be sealed negatively because of it.

Another explanation can be understood from a *drashah* given by the Chafetz Chaim on Yom Kippur 5677/1917 before *Ne’ilah*: “We are now standing in the final moments of the sealing of the decrees. For sins between man and Hashem, each one has certainly done *teshuvah* and pledged not to repeat his wrongs. We have admitted to our sins between man and his fellow man in *Tefillas Zakah* and have forgiven one another.

“We have nothing left to do except for the sin of stealing, those “little” debts that are forgotten because of oversight or because we don’t treat it seriously. Yom Kippur does not atone for such sins, and therefore, my advice to you is that when you admit to it in “*l’maan nechdal mei’oshek yadeinu*” you should pledge to set aside a time in the next few days to sit down and think about those debts in an effort to return them, and likewise, you should wholeheartedly forgive your friends for such debts that they may owe you.”

Sichos Chafetz Chaim, Vol. 2, p. 29

Tefillah: The Best Hishtadlus!

“לא תעמד על דם רעך” (יט, טז)

“When you see him dying and you can save him, such as one drowning in a river.” (Rashi)

The Chazon Ish wrote in his letters (Vol. 3, *siman* 2): Simply, the commandment of “do not stand on your friend’s blood” means the physical effort that a person must make when he sees his friend in trouble. But we have to know that this attempt is only “the repayment of a debt” that we are obligated to do. It is not so that we may later think that “my power and strength have gained me these achievements.” Therefore, the person who davens and pleads for his friend who is in trouble is doing more than one who tries to actually save him.

“התקדשתם והייתם קדשים כי אני ה' אליקים” (יט, כ)

Harav Naftali Katz, author of *Semichas Chachamim* writes in *Sefer Hatzava’ah* (21):

One who answers amen with *kavanah* is called “*kadosh*” and a hint to that is that “*ki ani*” is numerically equivalent to “amen.”

However, obviously, if a person sees his friend drowning in the river, and he is able to save him but does not do so and stands there to daven, then he is like a murderer! On the other hand, if the person knows he cannot save the drowning person, yet he still makes futile attempts just in order to quiet his conscience, then obviously, what he should have done

in this case is stand up to daven, because davening is the main thing.

On the same subject, Harav Yitzchak Zev of Brisk would say: Why is it that the way of the world is that when someone hears about a sick person in danger, they immediately begin to daven fervently for him, but as soon as they hear that there is some improvement, they desist with their *tefillos*? That’s like a sick person who began to take a lifesaving medicine, and as soon as the medicine begins to work, you take it away from him. Certainly one who does that is classified as a *rodef*!

Peninei Rabbeinu Hagri”z, p. 42

Answering Amen After Mi Shebeirach

“אהבת לרעך כמוך” (יט, יח)

The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 215a) writes: “When one hears a person making a *Mi Shebeirach*, it is correct to answer amen, and thus he fulfills the mitzvah of *v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho*.”

Harav Dovid Moskowitz, the Av Bais Din of Bonihad, related: There was a story about the gaon Harav Shmuel Engel of Radomishle, who spent Shabbos at the court of his Rebbe, the Divrei Chaim. The Rebbe noticed that Reb Shmuel was studying from his Gemara during *Krias HaTorah*, between one *oleh* and the other.

After davening, the Divrei Chaim said to him: “Let me rebuke you; although you are known as one who does everything according to *halachah*, and therefore you learn specifically between each *oleh*. But at that time, the *gabbai* says the *Mi Shebeirach*, and if it happens that he says a *Mi Shebeirach* for a sick person, and you are so busy learning that you are distracted from saying amen – maybe that amen is what is missing to complete the *brachah*, and the *yeshuah*, for that sick person.

Gishmei Brachah, p. 494

It’s Forbidden To Speak--Especially During Tefillah!

“ומקדשי תיראו” (יט, ל)

Rabi Yehudah Tzadkah, z”l, Rosh Yeshivah of Porat Yosef, once came to the yeshivah and noticed a new sign hanging at the entrance. “Please do not speak in the shul during *tefillah* and the reading of the Torah.”

The Rav took out his pen, inserted a comma after “the shul” and then added the word “and especially”, explaining to those around him that the wording of the sign could be misleading, and could be understood that only during the *tefillah* one must not talk in shul. But the truth is that because of the obligation of *mora mikdash*, fear of the holy place, one must not speak there at all.

Umasok Ha’or

“Love your friend like yourself”

Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, z”l, was careful that after saying *Tehillim betzibbur* for a sick person, R”l, the people davening should not leave the shul before the end of the *Mi Shebeirach* recited by the *chazzan*, so that they could reply amen to it.

Halichos Shlomo, Tefillah 88, 61.

One who replies amen on a *Mi Shebeirach* made for his friend fulfills the *mitzvas aseh*, the positive commandment of “*V’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho*.”

Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim 215a



The Parshah of the Akeidah

“This *parashah* is the main glory of Am Yisrael and their merit before their Father in Heaven, and therefore, we are fluent in it and recite it every day in our *tefillos*, and that is why it is worthy to study it and delve into it more than other *parshiyos*.”

(Abarbanel, Introduction to *Parashas Ha'akeidah*)

Reciting *Parashas Ha'akeidah* is an early custom cited in the *halachah* of *Lashon Hator* (*Orach Chaim* 1:5): “It is good to recite *Parashas Ha'akeidah*,” and the Bais Yosef explained: “In order to mention the *zechus avos* before Hashem, and to submit one's *yetzer* to serve Hashem, like Yitzchak was *moser nefesh*.”

The *poskim* write that in order to derive a benefit from this important *parashah*, it is not enough to merely recite it. One must delve into it and its explanations, because through it, he will recognize the greatness and miracles of Hashem, and thus will learn the importance of *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem (*Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim* 1, 8). In this short piece, we will not be able to fully delve into the explanations, but we will try to clarify the essence of it and the reason we recite it.

Reason for Mentioning the Akeidah

The author of the *Seder Hayom (Parashas Ha'akeidah)* offers a wonderful explanation for the reason that we recite the *parashah*: We have nothing to rely on other than the merit of our forebears, which sustains us in the *galus*. Because the matter of the *akeidah* is extremely lofty, both on part of the one sacrificing and the one being sacrificed, that Hashem promised Am Yisrael that on the Day of Judgment, when Am Yisrael is in distress because they are being pursued by their enemies, we should remember *Akeidas Yitzchak* and He will be filled with compassion for us, and we will not be afraid of anything and no Satan or bad thing will be able to do us in. Therefore, it is worthy that we should mention the *akeidah* each and every day before beginning to daven, because this way, Hashem will be filled with compassion for us and will accept our *tefillos* and pleas with mercy.

The *Seder Hayom* concludes with these words: “A *baal nefesh*, one with a soul, should not skip it under any circumstances, and [by saying it] he causes a great benefit for himself and all of Am Yisrael.”

An Introduction to the Parashah of the Korbanos

In his *sefer HaTorah Vehmitzvah (Bereishis 22:13)*, the Malbim explains the reason for the custom of saying *Parashas Ha'akeidah* in the morning, before *Korbanos*: It would really be worthy for every person to bring himself as a *korban* to Hashem, but Hashem, in His great mercy, accepts the body of the animal in exchange for the body of the person.

The *akeidah* was similar: when Avraham brought his son Yitzchak upon the *mizbeach*, and Yitzchak gave himself to be slaughtered for Hashem, his thoughts were considered as though they were actions, and Michael, the Sar of Yisrael, sacrificed his soul on the Heavenly *Mizbeach*. That is the reason Avraham was ordered to do the *akeidah*, even though he didn't actually slaughter in the end—so that it should be a preparation for his offspring who would be commanded to bring *korbanos*, and their activities are carried out through the fact that HaKadosh Baruch Hu accepts the *mesirus nefesh* as the actual act. Since then, any time one of the descendants of Avraham Avinu would be *moser nefesh* in thought, Hashem would remember *Akeidas Yitzchak* and accept his thought as an action.

Another reason is offered by Rav Yaakov Emden, in his *siddur Bais Yaakov*, according to the words of the Gemara in *Yoma* (28a), that before the *korban tamid* of each morning was slaughtered, they would ask [and the Kohein would reply]: “*He'ir pnei kol hamizrach, ad shebeChevron*, the whole east is illuminated, until Chevron,” in order to mention the *zechus avos* of those buried in Chevron.

Moser Nefesh Al Kiddush Hashem

We will conclude with a story of the *mussar gaon*, Harav Elya Lopian, ז”ל, who was a paragon of *mesirus nefesh* for the Name of Hashem.

Towards the end of the Masghiach's life, he was taken to the hospital for the last time, after suffering a severe heart attack, from which he did not recover. During the initial days of the hospitalization, his situation was very serious, and grew worse on Friday afternoon. One of the top professors summoned to his room examined him at length and then spread his hands in despair, having given up on the Masghiach's life.

Devoted family members and *talmidim* were standing around the bed at that time. Then, twenty hours later, on Shabbos morning, the professor came to the room, but this time, there was some hope in his eyes. “The situation has improved,” he said to the Masghiach's *talmid*, Rav Hirsch Paley. “His chances of survival are better than yesterday. We don't understand why he has improved, but who knows, maybe it has to do with what he is murmuring the whole time,” the professor remarked, but didn't explain.

“We also noticed that he is murmuring, but we were unable to understand it at all,” the students said. Then his grandson, who was listening to the exchange, stood up and said: “A few days ago, when we emerged from the ambulance to the hospital after the heart attack, I saw him murmuring as well. But unlike now, I was able to hear him and I was surprised to hear him repeated the *Parashah of the Akeidah* over and over again, as through preparing to be *moser nefesh* for Hashem.”

“That was during the last attack,” a grandson later related after his passing. “By the first attack we also saw him murmuring, but then he was saying the *tefillah* of *Nishmas kol chai tevarech es Shimcha...*” (*Shabbos Supplement Nitzavim Vayeilech* 5760).

“And My Mikdash You Should Fear – I Am Hashem”

It was at the end of Elul 5770/2010.

At around 11:00 at night, Rabbi Moshe M. and his wife were wending their way up the winding road towards the *yishuv* of Maaleh Ephraim in the Jordan Valley, where their family had been living for the past few years.

A Palestinian car driving very fast behind them signaled for them to pull over to the side of the road so it could overtake them. At the first opportunity, Reb Moshe pulled over into the shoulder, as he thanked Hashem for not making him like those unruly creatures who have no consideration for their own lives or the lives of others just to gain a few minutes. The car sped up and bypassed them, but instead of continuing to drive, it stopped and blocked the road. From that moment on, things unfolded at a very rapid pace:

A terrorist armed with an assault rifle got out of the car and from a range of just a few meters, began to fire at Reb Moshe's car. He fired no less than seventeen bullets, although miraculously, all, except for one, missed the target. The terrorist, apparently thrown off by his failure to hit the target, ran to his car to change the magazine. Reb Moshe, who was injured in his leg, utilized those few seconds, and guided by his intuition and great *siyata diShmaya*, he pulled his wife out of the bullet riddled car and urged her to run with him into the ravine that ran along the road.

At any normal time, the idea would have been ridiculously angerous. It was a rocky slope that descended some thirty meters, and they had no means of protecting themselves from their pursuers. But with their lives hanging by a thread, and the terrorist set to return with his reloaded gun in just seconds, they had nothing to lose. They began to descend the steep slope, which was dark and full of obstacles. Out of the corner of their eye, they noticed the terrorist coming back to the car with two friends, most likely to “confirm” that they were dead.

At one point, the Rav and his wife began slipping downwards, as Reb Moshe's injured leg bled profusely.

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When they finally landed on stable ground, at the bottom of the ravine, Reb Moshe pulled out his cellular phone, which miraculously had remained in his pocket, and summoned security services. Within a few minutes, forces arrived on the scene, and after some searching, discovered them in the ravine and worked to rescue them and bandage their wounds. At the same time, soldiers began a manhunt for the terrorists.

It was gratifying to hear that they were finally captured. Under interrogation, the terrorists related that they had planned the attack for a long time. They'd trained with guns and practiced surveillance, and were sure they would succeed. They'd even dug the grave in which they planned to bury their victims. In fact, they were very surprised when the plans did not work out as they had envisioned.

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One riddle remained unsolved at the end of the incident: the security forces could not figure out how it was possible that from the bottom of the ravine, thirty meters below the road, the Rav and his wife were able to summon security forces.

It's an area where even on the road, the cellular reception is spotty at best, and that would just be much worse in the wadi. Moreover, after the call to security services, the Rav and his wife could not make even one more phone call. In fact, when the rescuers arrived on the scene, the cell phone did not emit any signals that could help them track down the people they were looking for.

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About half a year after this incident, after Rabbi M.'s leg had healed, and he and his wife returned to normal life, they held a big *seudas hoda'ah*. Reb Moshe spoke, and emotionally described the miracles they had experienced that led to their rescue, and did not forget to note the miracle that he was able to make a call from the cell phone in an area with no reception. Everyone was moved to hear this.

The next speaker was one of the rabbanim in the yeshiva that Reb Moshe teaches in. During his speech, he surprised all the listeners when he said he had a reasonable explanation that could shed some light on the mysterious miracle of the cellular reception:

He reminded Reb Moshe that some ten years before this incident, when he first purchased a cellular phone, he said to his friends that he was very afraid of having the *yetzer hara* in his pocket, and therefore, he had decided that he would never enter a shul or *bais medrash* with a cell phone in his pocket, even if it was off.

He explained this with a simple reasoning: everyone agreed that a cell phone that is on disrupts the atmosphere and routine in a shul, and prevents people from fulfilling the obligation of “*umikdashi tira'u*, my *mikdash* you should fear” properly. When one is learning Torah, the telephone in the pocket can easily turn the learning into “*karaim karaim*, shreds.” With *tefillah* it is impossible to imagine a person asking: “*Shema Koleiun...*” and please accept our *tefillos*, while the phone is ringing or buzzing in his pocket and automatically, his hand reaches for the phone to press the reject button.

Because of Reb Moshe's *kabbalah*, the speaker related, there was a tremendous *chizuk* in the *Bais Medrash* and many decided to join his initiative. So in his merit, the shul became “clean” of cellular phones during learning and davening. “It is no wonder then, that when a person like this decides to prevent having the device in his pocket disturb him from davening and serving Hashem, then Hashem repaid him *middah kenegged middah*, measure for measure, and this device was able to save him from a death sentence,” the speaker concluded.

Lehisaden B'Avavesecha