

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

PARASHAS CHUKAS

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

In the Merit of the Mitzvah of Parah, One Merits All the Mitzvos

זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר (יט, ב)

Many have asked: This *parashah* speaks about the *mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah*; as such, why does it not begin with the words "zos *chukkas haparah*?" as, for example, it says with *Pesach* (*Shemos* 12:43), "zos *chukas haPesach*?"

The **Ohr Hachaim** explains:

The primary obligation of a person is to perform the *mitzvos* of Hashem only because he was thus instructed from Above. But if he does it only because he understands the logic, it is not considered as though he performed the *mitzvah* properly. Therefore, the *mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah*, which is a *chok* and has no reason written in the Torah, "zos *chukas haTorah*", teaches us that one who performs this *mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah*, even if he does not understand its reason, is considered as though he performed the entire Torah, because with this act it is apparent that his intention when performing all the other *mitzvos* was only to do the Will of Hashem.

Harav Chaim Adler of Stramtura, in his sefer **Hachafetz Chaim**, expounds on the words of the **Ohr Hachaim** to explain the *nusach* of the *tefillah* of *Elokai Netzor*: "Venafshi k'afar lakol tihiyeh, pesach libi besorasecha v'acharei mitzvosecha tirdof nafshi," we ask Hashem that in the merit of our desire [nefesh is from a language of wanting] to perform the *mitzvos* that have no written reasons like "k'afar *parah adumah*", it should be considered as though we performed all 613 *mitzvos*, even though they are not all pertinent in our times.

Torah, Teshuvah, Tefillah and Tzedakah

The **Imrei Chaim** of **Vizhnitz** explained on the words "zos *chukas haTorah*," that "zos" is numerically equivalent to "tzom kol mammon" [*teshuvah*, *tefillah* and *tzedakah*.] The *passuk* teaches us that in order to reach great achievements in Torah learning, we have to combine the learning with "zos", with *teshuvah*, *tefillah* and *tzedakah*.

For Every Kula there Should Be a Chumra

זוהה הטהר על הטמא (יט, ט)

In *Maseches Yoma* (43b), Chazal explain from this *passuk* that the purity of the *parah adumah* can also be done by a *tvul yom* [a person who immersed from his impurity but is not yet completely pure until the sun sets]. Moreover, in order to refute the distorted views of the *tzedokim*, who prohibited this, Chazal instructed (*Parah* 3:7) that the purification process of *parah adumah* should be done specifically through a *tvul yom*.

The Gemara further explains (*Yoma* 2a) that to balance this *kula*, this leniency, Chazal were stricter about other details in the process: they would raise babies at home from the moment they were born, and protected them to make sure they did not become impure, and other stringencies explained in the *Mishnah* (ibid 1-2), so that through them, they would not come to be lax in this important *mitzvah*.

According to this, the **Alter of Kelm** instated a custom in the **Bais Hatalmud** of **Kelm** that during the summer, they had to hurry to recite *Pesukei deZimra* and the *brachos* of *Krias Shema* because the *zman* of *Krias Shema* was earlier. On the other hand, they spent much longer reciting *Emes Veyatziv*, with a lot of *kavanah*, in order to show that *tefillah* is not something light in our eyes.

Tefillas Chana, p. 61

Amen—the Source of Mayim Chaim

מיים חיים אל כלי (יט, ז)

The **Zohar** (*Vayeilech* 285, 1) explains that the *passuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 2:13) "Osi azvu mekor *mayim chaim*," refers to someone who does not want to sanctify the Name of Hashem by answering amen.

A hint to this can be found in this *passuk*: "*mayim chaim el keli*", *el keli* is numerically equivalent to "amen."

Emunas Yitzchak Vol. I, p. 191

Replying Amen Saves One from Troubles

זישלח מלאך ויצאנו ממצרים (כ, ז)

The **Zohar** (*Vayeilech* 285, 1) says that the power of replying amen with *kavanah* helps Am Yisrael be spared from troubles.

A hint to this can be found in this *passuk*: "And He sent an angel," with the power of replying amen [which is numerically equivalent to "malach", angel], "Hashem took us out of *Mitzrayim*," Hashem takes us out of *meitzarim*, tight straits.

See Sefer Hagematriyos, Parashas Balak

One Shouldn't Daven in an Open Area

ועברה נא בארצך לא נעבר בשדה ובכרם...דרך המלך נלך לא נטה ימין ושמאל עד אשר נעבר גבלך (ז, יז)

Harav Yonasan Eibeshutz explained: Edom knew that the power of Am Yisrael was in its mouth, and because Moshe Rabbeinu understood the fear of Edom that perhaps while Yisrael would pass through

their land they would daven for Edom's downfall, he promised them, "We will not pass in a field or vineyard," in concealed places where one can daven, but rather "we will take the main route," and because in an open place with no walls or barriers, we will not be able to pray against you when we pass. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 90, 5).

Tijeres Yonasan

Absolute Truth—A Condition for Tefillah Being Accepted

ויאמר אם נתן תתן את העם הזה כידך (כא, ב)

"Amalek was residing in the Negev, and changed its language to speak in the Canaanite language, so Israel would pray to Hashem to let the Canaanites fall into their hands, and they are not Canaanaim. Am Yisrael saw that they were dressed like Amalekites but spoke like Canaanites, so they said let us just pray in general, thus, 'If You give this nation into our hands.'" (*Rashi*)

It needs to be clarified: HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows what each person is thinking. If Am Yisrael would have erred and davened that He give the **Cannanites** into their hands, would He not have saved them from the **Amalekites**?

There is a big lesson here about the power of words that emerge from our mouths, especially when davening, says **Harav Aharon Baski, Hy"d**, author of *Lev Aharon*. If *tefillah* does not go hand in hand with absolute truth, it may not be accepted! This is also hinted to in the *passuk* in *Tehillim*: (145:18): "Karov Hashem lechol korav lechol asher yikreu'hu b'emes." The closer the *tefillah* is to the *middah* of truth, the closer Hashem is to answer and accept it willingly.

Maalos Hatefillah

In What Merit Are Our Tefillos Accepted

על כן יאמר בספר מלחמותה (ד, כא)

The **Kozhnutzer Maggid** says: Even though, regretfully, our many *tefillos* for the Redemption have not yet been answered, they are still effective in our times because through them, all the other *tefillos* are accepted. There is a hint to this in the *passuk* (*Melachim* I, 8:48): "Vehispallelu eilechah derech artzam", all the *tefillos* reach "Eilecha", You, through the *tefillos* for artzam, for the Redemption of our land.

The **Maggid** explained on this *passuk*, "al kein," our *tefillos* recited at this time when we are scattered among the seventy nations [which is numerically equivalent to "kein"], "ye'amer basefer," are mentioned in the Book of Mercy, in the merit of "the wars of Hashem," the *tefillos* in which we "fight" for *Kavod Shamayim* and the revelation of the *Shechinah* when the *Geulah* will arrive, may it be speedily in our day.

Yalkut Avodas Yisrael

Gates of Gan Eden—In This World

7 Tammuz (5688) is the *yahrtzeit*

of **Harav Baruch Frankel Teumim, the Baruch Taam**, of whom it is related:

He once sat at a *brise*, and suddenly smiled. One of the people sitting there asked why he had smiled and he replied: I saw something in Gan Eden Above, so I smiled. The man then asked: And how does one merit this? The **Baruch Taam** replied: Chazal (*Shabbos* 119b) said that anyone who answers Amen the gates of Gan Eden open for him, as it says "poschin" in the present tense, that while he is alive he merits to see it. If you also make sure to answer amen with all your strength, I am sure that you will also see it!

Ohel Baruch, 47

Anyone who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden open for him.



Parashas Haketores

The Advantage of Saying Parashas Haketores

The service of the *Ketores* is very beloved, as Chazal say (*Tanchuma Tetzaveh* 15): "Hashem said, of all the *korbanos* that you bring, there is none more beloved to me than the *Ketores*... because all the *korbanos* are for the needs of Am Yisrael...but the *Ketores* is not for a sin, and not for any guilt, but rather for the happiness."

Chazal said regarding the recital of the *Parashiyos* of the *Korbanos*, (*Taanis* 27b), that through it we can be atoned even during the time of *galus*, when we don't have actual *korbanos*, so, too, Chazal praised the service of the *Ketores*, that protects us from all troubles even when we do not have the actual *Ketores* that was brought in the Bais HaMikdash.

The Zohar writes in *Parashas Vayakhel* (218 2): It is a decree before Hashem that anyone who peruses and reads each day the *parashah* describing the *Ketores* will be saved from all bad things and from all spells that are in the world, and will not be harmed that entire day, because the *strata achara* cannot control him.

Further, the Zohar emphasizes that one must have a lot of concentration when reciting it, and adds that if people would know how important the *Ketores* is to Hashem, they would take each and every word from the *parashah* of the *Ketores* and would don it on their heads like a golden crown. Therefore, one who concentrates on it each day merits a share in this world and in the World to Come, and death dissipates from above him, and he is saved from all kinds bad decrees in this world and the next. On the other hand, one who is not careful to recite it each day causes himself great losses, and is afflicted by plagues and harsh decrees, *R"l*.

The Zohar further learns from the words of the *pasuk* in *Parashas Tetzaveh* (*Shemos* 30:8): "*Ketores* is always before Hashem for your generations." Because the *Ketores* is so beloved by Hashem, therefore it is always standing before Him, and even though *tefillah* is extremely important, the *parashah* of the *Ketores* is dearer and more important.

The Segulos of the Ketores

The Mabi"t wrote in his *sefer Bais Elokim* (*Shaar Hatefillah* chapter 16): "We say *Pitum Haketores* each day morning and afternoon because it is a *segulah* regarding *dever*, [plagues], and as we found that when Moshe went up on High, each of the angels gave him one *davar*, one thing...even the Angel of Death gave him something, as it says (*Bamidbar* 17:12) "And he gave the *Ketores* and it atoned for the nation." Because the *Ketores* atones during a time of plague, so, too, reading about it is beneficial, as it says, "*veneshalmah parim sefaseinu*," our words will come in place of the cows [of the *korbanos*].

The Mabi"t adds: "There is a hint here regarding the *chelbena* that is mixed with the ten other spices, which had a bad odor, while the other spices smelled good. It was the nature of the good smelling spices to have an effect on the *chelbena* and cause it to take on the good smell. That is a hint to the Angel of Death, who is like the *chelbena*, and he mixes with a crowd that has something holy in it to try and harm them. And when the people are good and upstanding in their hearts, and repent completely, then the Angel of Death cannot take hold of them; rather they control him until the Angel of Death reluctantly has to reply amen."

The *Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avodah* further

says (*Shaar Ha'ashmores* 11) in the name of the Arizal that saying the *parashah* of the *Ketores* is a *segulah* for doing complete *teshuvah*. The *Kaf Hachaim* (*Orach Chaim* 132:23) writes that reciting *Pitum Haketores* that is written in *ksav ashuris* like a *Sefer Torah* is a *segulah* to merit wealth and be successful in one's endeavors. But see there (*se'if katan* 18) where he emphasizes that even though there is a *segulah* a person should not have *kavanah* in saying the *Ketores* for his own benefit, but rather to bring *nachas* to his Creator.

Saying It Inside

The Rema writes (*Orach Chaim* 132 2) "Some wrote to make sure to recite *Pitum Haketores* from the written text and not by heart, because saying it is instead of sacrificing it, and there is a chance that he may miss one of its components, and it is said that he is deserving of death if he lacks even one of its components."

The Bais Yosef (*ibid*) brings this in the name of the Rishonim and adds that in a few places it was customary not to recite it at all because of this. But later, he rejects this and writes that what it says that one who skips one of the components is deserving of death, does not refer to the punishment for the fact that something was missing, but rather for the fact that he entered the Mikdash unnecessarily, and suchlike. He adds that even if it says like the *Rishonim* cited above, one should not refrain from saying it for this reason, because with some attention it is possible to make sure not to miss any of its components when reciting it.

Thinking of Teshuvah Before Saying It

The *sefarim* bring down that one should think about *teshuvah* for the sin of *lashon hara* and *rechilus* before reciting the *Ketores*, as Chazal said (*Pesachim* 82b), that the *Ketores* atones for the sin of *lashon hara* that is said in secret. The *sefer Mizmor L'Assaf* (by Harav Sasson Shanduch, one of the great scholars of Baghdad, *Mussar L'Parashas Hakorbanos*) explained this with a wonderful parable: There was a king who imposed a tax on his servants, and because some of them were very poor and could not afford to pay the tax, they instead offered a simple offering—as much as they could afford—in a simple, yet clean vessel, and they presented it to the king shamefacedly, bowing and submissive.

Seeing that their actions and expressions testified to their strong desire to bring before the king the best of gifts, but they did not do so only because they could not afford to, the king forgave them and was appeased with their offering.

Imagine if these people would have sent their meager offering in a dirty, demeaning vessel, without according the king the worthy respect. The king would have certainly become angry at them and punished them, because it was incumbent upon them to do the best they possibly could to bring pleasure to the king.

We, too, are servants of the King—the King of Kings. During the time when the Bais HaMikdash was standing, we were like wealthy people and we were able to present Hashem with an honorable sacrifice, such as the *Ketores*. But even in our time, when due to our sins we are like paupers and have nothing but the words of *Parashas Haketores* to recite—at least we should present our offering in a clean, respectful vessel. Thus, we must first repent for the sins of our tongue and thus our offering will be accepted graciously by Hashem.

Surprising Salvation in Shomrei Shabbos

Who hasn't heard of the most famous shul in the United States, the Shomrei Shabbos *shtieblach* on 13th Avenue in Boro Park, Brooklyn?

This shul is a meeting place for the poor and indigent, alongside the wealthiest and most prominent members of the community; collectors from Eretz Yisrael alongside well known American personalities. Everyone is warmly welcomed here. There are *minyanim* twenty four hours a day and anyone who is hungry can find a bite to eat and something to drink.

Hence it was no wonder when two people found themselves side by side one night while waiting to daven *Maariv*. One was a New York based philanthropist who had many assets and was fabulously wealthy, while the other was an apparently Yerushalmi Chassidic Jew, with a most noble countenance, but who was clearly poverty stricken.

Already at the beginning of the *tefillah*, the wealthy man noticed that his fellow bench-mate was deeply distraught. His neglected look and dull eyes aroused his compassion, and the man was davening with copious tears and fervency that captivated him.

"He must have left his whole family at home in the Holy City," the wealthy man thought to himself compassionately. "And he came to Brooklyn to try and raise some money, but the way he looks makes it clear that he's about to return to his starving family empty handed. How depressing..." The wealthy man continued to weave what he assumed was the other man's story.

The thoughts flooding his mind gave him no rest and before he began davening the wealthy man turned to his neighbor and began to ask: "Are you from Yerushalayim? You must have come here to America..."

The neighbor shook himself out of his deep thought, but then motioned that he could not speak right then, and the wealthy man would have to wait patiently until after davening. But even after davening was over, he could not ask any further questions because the man was apparently caught up in a lofty place as he recited *Shemoneh Esrei* with deep emotion, completely ignoring everything and anyone around him.

As his time was limited, the wealthy man did not think twice. The man had made a tremendous impression on him, and he took out his checkbook, wrote a check for a huge sum, even by his standards, placed it under the other man's *siddur* and hurried on his way.

A short time later, he began to feel pangs of regret. In *tzeddakah*, like in business, he didn't like taking excessive risks, and who knew? Perhaps this person wasn't needy at all; maybe he did not want to accept charity. How had he acted so impulsively—against his nature—and given such a large sum to a man he did not know at all?

"At least I had in mind to do a mitzvah," he soothed himself. "And a good thought is connected to an action by Hashem."

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Days, weeks and months passed. The memory of that night in Shomrei Shabbos had long been forgotten by the wealthy man. One night, when he was in the middle of receiving people in his home during his regular reception hours for those seeking donations, two familiar *meshulachim* suddenly entered. After greeting him, the *meshulachim* surprised him with a question: "Perhaps you know our acquaintance, Reb So and So from Yerushalayim?"

The wealthy man raised his eyes from his checkbook, lowered his reading glasses to the tip of his nose, and shrugged. "How should I know him?!"

"Excuse us," they said. "Just that the description he gave us sounded just like you, but me must have made a mistake."

"One minute," the wealthy man's eyes suddenly flashed in recollection. "What's the story? Who's the man and what is his story?"

The two realized that they had an opportunity to get into a real conversation with the wealthy man, and decided to share their story:

"About ten months ago, we met our friend, Reb Ploni, and the story he told us was unbelievable even by the standards of veteran *meshulachim* such as myself. The man related that he had just returned from America after being there for a few weeks to collect money to help him emerge from the mound of debts he was buried in following the marriages of some of his children.

"This man is a real *tzaddik*, and this was the first time that, due to the circumstances, he had to come onto other people for assistance. But his refined nature and quiet personality were a drawback for him, and after a few weeks, he found himself on the verge of traveling home with just a paltry sum that would hardly cover his travel costs. With the little remaining money could not even cover the smallest of his many debts.

"I was very broken during those days," the man told us, "but I decided that I would not waste the last day there trudging from one address to another, but rather, I would turn to the one and only Address, the One to Whom all wealth belongs, to the King of Kings."

"Early in the morning he entered Shomrei Shabbos, which was already bustling with worshippers. He went up to one of the higher floors and began to prepare for *Shacharis*.

"After a tearful, emotional *Shacharis*, he ate some breakfast, and then sat down to recite *Tehillim* until *Minchah*, which was also extremely emotional and elevating. Then he continued reciting *Tehillim*, like a son repenting before his father.

"By the time *Maariv* came, the man had almost completely disconnected from this world, and didn't even notice the people around him. But suddenly, in the middle of *Ahavos Olam*, he was disturbed by a pat on his shoulder:

"I raised my eyes from the *siddur*," he told us, "and I see a Yid who clearly was a giver, not a taker. He began to ask me questions about where I was from and if I was collecting money here."

"For a moment I wondered if I should answer him, but then I remembered that I was in the middle of a conversation with the biggest 'Gvir' in the world, and how could I be distracted to answer a flesh and blood man, wealthy as he may be?!"

"I decided to ignore the question and continue davening. It was a big sacrifice on my part, because the man appeared willing to help. But I strengthened myself with the knowledge that Hashem could send me a salvation after davening as well..."

"Can I finish the story for you?" the wealthy man surprised his stunned guests.

"You must realize by now that I am the man who put the check under your friend's *siddur*. Now I can also thank you for taking a load of my heart, because since then I have been carrying around regret, as doubts have plagued me that perhaps the check I had given had reached a person who did not really need it.

"Now I see that I had the merit of being an emissary from Above to rescue a Yid who realized where the best Address is for a *yeshuah* and for success," the *gvir* concluded. The two *meshulachim* parted with the wealthy man, the hefty check in their hands paling in comparison to the clear message they had learned—one that they would remember for the rest of their lives.

Beifkudecha Asicha, Vol. III, p. 395