

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



PARASHAS MATOS

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Preparing a House for Hashem

“איש כי יבן ביתו” (ג, א)

The **Be'er Moshe** of Ozherov explains:

“*Ish ki yidor*,” when a person builds a home for himself to live in, “*neder l’Hashem*,” he must make sure to also make a “home” for Hashem, whether by making a generous donation to a shul or *bais medrash*, or by setting aside a room in his house for learning and davening, and holy things, for Hashem. As the *Zohar (Tazria, 50 a)* says, one who builds a house must say with his mouth that he is doing so for the purpose of serving Hashem, and then his home will be bestowed with *siyata diShmaya*.

A Person Must Act In Accordance with His Prayers

“לא יחל דברו ככל היצא מפיו יעשה” (ל, א)

Harav **Zev Wolf** of Zhitomir says:

During davening, when we mention the greatness and awe of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, we immediately feel the extent of our lowliness compared to His greatness. A person must be very careful not to decline from this level after davening, but rather to behave for the rest of the day in accordance with his *tefillah*, so that he should not later become arrogant.

This *passuk* hints to this concept: “*Lo yachel devaro*,” a person should not defile what his mouth said while davening and behave differently by following his *yetzer hara* and urges, but rather, “as what comes out of his mouth he should do,” he must always behave in accordance with his behavior when he utters the words of davening.

Ohr Hameir

Hataras Nedarim During Yamim Noraim

“לא יחל דברו ככל היצא מפיו יעשה” (ל, א)

Harav **Mordechai Cohen** of Tzefas, author of *Sifsei Kohein*, cites this *passuk* as the source of the custom of *Hataras Nedarim* on Erev Rosh Hashanah:

“*Lo yachel devaro kechol*,” the last letter of each word is an acronym for Elul, teaching us that one must annul his vows in the month of Elul before Rosh Hashanah.

Another time when it is customary to annul vows is the eve of Yom Kippur, in the *tefillah* of *Kol Nidrei*. The *sefer Ohr Hachamah* notes that this custom, too, is hinted to in the words of

this *parashah* (further 30:14): “*Kol neder vechol shevuas issar laanos nefesh ishah yekimenu v’ishah yefeferenu*, any vow or binding oath of self affliction [that a woman makes], her husband can either uphold it or revoke it.” When the mitzvah is to “*Vanos nefesh*, to afflict ourselves” one must annul every promise and oath.

When Does Am Yisrael Alter Their Skill?

“ואת בלעם בן בעור הרגו כהרב” (לא, ה)

“**He came upon Yisrael, and exchanged his skill with their skill: they are only saved through their mouths, through prayer and pleading, and he came and took their skill and cursed with his mouth. They then came to him and changed their skill with that of the nations of the world, who come with a sword, as it says (Bereishis 27:40): ‘And by your sword you shall live.’**” (*Rashi*)

According to Rashi, the *sefer Nachalas Ezriel* (in

No One Was Missed

“עבדיך נשאו את ראש אנשי המלחמה אשר בידו ולא נפקד ממונו איש” (לא, מט)

The *Tanna Devei Eliyahu* (Rabba 11) says: “In whose merit did Hashem punish the nations of the world on behalf of Am Yisrael? In the merit of people who rise early and go to the *bais knesses* and the *bais medrash* in the morning and in the evening and reply amen, and bless Hashem with amen, and of them the *passuk* says (*Tehillim* 55:19) “*Padah beshalom nafshi mikrav li ki berabbim hayu imadi*.”

We can find a hint to this in the acronym of “*velo nijkad mimenu ishi*” which is “amen”, showing us that Bnei Yisrael prevailed in their wars in the merit of saying amen, as the *Tanna Devei Eliyahu* says.

Emunas Yitzchak, Matos

Parashas Vezos Habrachah) explains the words of the *passuk (Devarim 33:29)* “Fortunate are you, Yisrael. Who is like you, a people whose salvation comes from Hashem, the Shield Who helps you, your majestic Sword. Your enemies will deny it of you...” : The way of the world is that the power of

Yisrael is in their mouth, as they daven to Hashem [“*am nosha b’Hashem*”], but there are times when the non-Jews deny this power by also using it [“*veyikachashu oyvecha lach*”], therefore the *passuk* promises, “*v’asher cherev gaavasecha*,” in such a case you can use a sword against them and you are guaranteed that you will win them.

The *sefer Ne’im Zemiros (Tehillim 20, 8)* adds a recommendation from the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (20 8-9): “Some come with their chariots, others come with their horses, and we have the Name of Hashem our G-d that we mention; they bowed and fell and we have risen and gained strength.” When the nations of the world fight us with chariots and horses, we have to mention the Name of Hashem in *tefillah* in order to fight them, but when they use our power and fall to their knees in prayer to Hashem, then we will rise up against them with swords and spears.

Guarding the Tools

The **Chafetz Chaim** explains: From Rashi we understand that a Jew’s speech is his “tool of the trade” and if so, just like an artisan protects his tools with all his might, so that he should be able to ply his trade, so, too, every Jew must guard the cleanliness of his speech so that his *tefillas* will emerge from his mouth perfect and clean and thus will be accepted On High.

Chafetz Chaim Al HaTorah

A Tikkun Through Teshuvah

“כל דבר אשר יבא באש תעבירו באש וטהר... וכל אשר לא יבא באש תעבירו במים” (לא, כג)

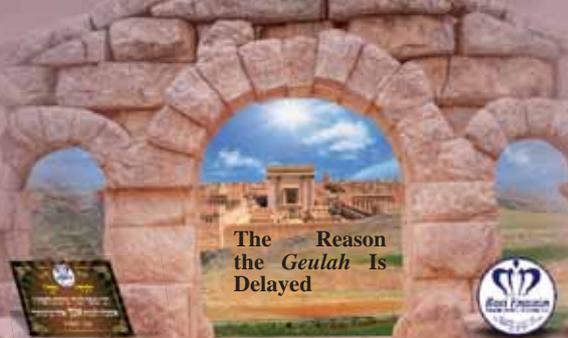
The **Ben Ish Chai** explains:

“Everything that comes in fire pass through fire and it will be purified”: the sins that, during the times of the *Bais HaMikdash*, could be atoned for with a *korban* that was burned in fire, have a rectification in our times as well, by reading the *pesukim* in the Torah, which is compared to fire. As the Gemara says (*Menachos* 110a): “Anyone who studies *Toras Chatas* it is as though he sacrificed a *chatas*.” However, “anything that does not come into fire,” for sins that cannot be atoned by a *korban*, such as mockery, anger, lying and suchlike, “pass through water,” there is no rectification in this day except regret and *teshuvah* which is done from the depths of the soul and with copious tears.

Aderes Eliyahu

“A chassid fasted over the length of the *galus*, and it was revealed to him in a dream: ‘How can the Geulah come if the world does not take care to reply amen on the *brachah* of *Geulah*, ‘*Hamachazir Shechinaso leTzion*’ (because of the recital of *Modim Derabbanan* right after it) and ‘*Hapores sukkas shalom...v’al Yerushalayim*’ (because of the recital of *Veshamru* right after it.)”

(*Sefer Hagan Vederech Moshe* Day 11)



During these days, we all raise our eyes and plead for the Redemption.

Let us strengthen ourselves in responding amen, and with that we will merit to see the fulfillment of “*Vesechezenah eineinu beshuvcha leTzion berachamim...*” Amen.

Pesukei Dezimra – Introduction

“Rabi Yosi said: My lot should be with those who finish *Hallel* each day. Is that so? Did we not learn that one who recites *Hallel* each day is a *mecharef* and *megadef*—curser and reviler! But [by *Hallel*] he meant, *Pesukei Dezimra*.” (*Shabbos* 118b)

The reason for reciting *Pesukei Dezimra* as an introduction to *tefillah* is learned by the *Gaonim* (cited in *Machzor Vitri* 40) from the words of Rabi Samlo (Avodah Zarah 7b): “A person should always first take care of his praise of Hashem and then should daven.”

Tosafos further explains (*Brachos* 31a, beginning *Rabbanan*): “One does not daven from lightheadedness and mirth, but with solemnity and joy of the mitzvah, as though he is delving into *divrei Torah*, and therefore, it is customary to say *Pesukei Dezimra* and *Ashrei* prior to *tefillah*.”

Kolo Zimer Aritzim-

His Voice Cut Off the Evil Ones

Another reason for reciting *Pesukei Dezimra* before davening is explained by *Mateh Moshe* (*Amud Ha'avodah* 53), who says:

“From the earth to the sky there is no empty place; it is all full with masses and hordes [of forces], some of them are pure, *baalei chessed*, and there are, lower down, a few forces that are impure and harmful and that bring bad...A person's *tefillos* pass between these forces and rise to the Heavens; if he has a merit, they will not be harmed...and if he does not have a merit, some of the destructive forces harm them on the way...When a person recites the *zemiros*, then those destructive forces disappear.”

The *Mateh Moshe* continues: “And they are called ‘*zemiros*’ from ‘*mezamer*’, to cut off, as it says (*Yeshayah* 18:5): ‘*Vecharas hazalzim bamazmeros*, he cut off the tendrils with pruning-hooks’. And of this David Hamelech said (*Tehillim* 119:54): ‘*Zemiros hayu li chukecha beveis megurai*, Your statutes were to me like songs in the house of my wanderings.’ He is referring to those places where I was afraid on the way and I had fears (from the evil forces), the *zemiros* cut them down.”

The *Mateh Moshe* concludes with a warning: “Therefore, one must be very careful not to speak between these *zemiros* [*Pesukei Dezimra*] until after *Shemoneh Esrei* and to have the right thoughts so that his *tefillos* do not get interrupted. If he speaks, his *kavanah* can dissipate and those hordes of forces will return to fight war and deflect his *tefillos*.”

Similarly, the *Meor Vashemesh* writes (*Parashas Beshalach*): “When we say *Pesukei Dezimra*, we connect ourselves with the angels to thank them and praise the King of the World, and we say, ‘*Hallelu es Hashem min Hashamayim*.’ Through this, we purify the *Olam Hayetzirah*, and cut off the evil elements, similar to pruning all the thorns that surround the rose at the top. That is why it is called *Pesukei Dezimra*.”

Keys to the Palace of the King

The *Maggid of Mezeritsch*, *zy"ta*, would point out that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur many people take care to recite the *Amidah* word for word with more *kavanah* than the rest of the year, because these *tefillos* are not recited regularly, and therefore, their hearts and minds are focused on saying them properly. They make every effort to avoid becoming distracted by a stray thought and the like.

For the same reason, most people do not devote too much attention to *Pesukei Dezimra*, because it is “old” and they have said it hundreds of times each year. People assume that they will not derive the inspiration they need to daven from *Pesukei Dezimra* in any case, and thus do not concentrate so fully.

In truth, the *Maggid* says, we have to be very careful with this part of *tefillah*, because although the *Amidah* is the main part, when a person literally speaks to the King, as Chazal have

already asked elsewhere, but on the same subject: How can a person who does not have the keys to the courtyard enter the house?!

We have to understand the great power *Pesukei Dezimra* has every day of the year, to subdue and cut off all the forces that deflect and delay our *tefillos*. Therefore one must take care to say them with great *kavanah*, with fear and awe, and thus we will merit to have our *tefillos* accepted with love. (*Likutim Yekarim* 134).

The Mahar"i Algazi writes in his *sefer Shalmei Tzibbur* (end of the laws of *Birchos HaTorah*): “I found in the responsa manuscript of the Radba"z, *z"l*, who cited the *Midrash Hane'elam*: When the *Shechinah* comes to a *bais knesses* and sees the worshippers reciting *zemiros*, some of them ahead and some of them behind, it immediately disappears.”

The Virtues of Reciting Slowly with Kavanah

The *poskim* attribute special significance to the recital of *Pesukei Dezimra* slowly, as the *Shulchan Aruch* instructs (*Orach Chaim* 51:8): “One does not say the *zemiros* rapidly, rather, calmly,” and the *Be'er Heitev* there adds: “He should not skip over a single word or swallow them, but rather should recite them as though he is counting coins.”

The *Kolbo* (6) cites *Rabbeinu Nosson*: There are people who recite *Pesukei Dezimra* quickly in order to be able to daven *Shemoneh Esrei* with the *tzibbur*. They are not doing something good when they cut short the praise of the King of Kings for their own needs; would any king who would be appeased by such a thing?!

The *Maggid*, in his studies with the *Bais Yosef*, warned him to rise early each morning to come to shul so that he could recite *Pesukei Dezimra* in the right place, and in order, because one who comes late has to daven in a patchwork, to say the later parts earlier and then fill in the earlier parts later. And “all the orders of *tefillah* are arranged in the right order, and if you say the earlier parts later, you are disrupting and ruining the order.”

The *sefer Olas Tamid* (Chapter 17) says: “A person should prepare all his senses and strengths to sing and praise, elevate and extol Hashem, and you should submit your soul to slowly recite each word and at least to understand the meaning of each word. The greater the concentration on your *tefillos*, the more joy and awe and love for Hashem will grow in your soul.”

Twenty Minutes Are Not Enough

Harav Yechezkel Levinstein, the *Mashgiach* of Ponovezh, was very careful to say *Pesukei Dezimra* slowly and with great concentration. As such, he never began reciting *Pesukei Dezimra* when everyone else did; he always began earlier, aside for twice when he had no choice but to start with everyone else. He would often say that the twenty minutes normally allocated in *yeshivos* for *Pesukei Dezimra* were not enough for him. (*Mofess Hador* 1:11)

Moreover, Rav Chatzkel would recommend to his *talmidim* to be very scrupulous about reciting *Pesukei Dezimra* word for word, slowly, and noted that this had no less of an effect on a person than a powerful *musarr shmuess*. That is because introspecting into the greatness of Hashem and His leadership of the world strengthens the *emunah* within a person, and as such, affects his every action. (*Birchas Avraham-Torah Utefillah, Pesukei Dezimra*)

Someone who davened *vasikin* regularly once asked the *Mashgiach* if on days that he comes late to davening it is better to cut short the *Pesukei Dezimra* in order to be able to daven *Shemoneh Esrei* on time at the *neitz*. The *Mashgiach* replied, *vasikin* is an enhancement of *tefillah*, but first of all, there needs to be *tefillah*, and without *Pesukei Dezimra* how can there be *tefillah*?! (*Tefillas Chana*, p. 45)

The Tefillah that Yielded Fruits Sixty Years Later

When It Hurts—You Scream!

Harav Uri of Strelisk, *zy"ta*, known as the Saraf of Strelisk, was truly a holy and G-dly man. It was not for naught that he was known as the Saraf; his every action personified holiness and purity, and when he would speak for those close to him, he seemed to be consumed by fire.

If that's how he was when learning and teaching, how much more so was the case when he was davening. During the hours each day that he dedicated to *tefillah*, it was virtually impossible to stand in his presence. His soul was so fired up in his boy that it literally radiated heat; his voice rose and made those around him tremble, and his feet were lifted off the ground as he paced back and forth from one side of the *bais medrash* to the other.

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One Erev Shabbos, a wealthy Jew from Germany arrived in Strelisk. He began his visit by davening a lengthy *Shacharis* at the Rebbe's *bais medrash*. Rav Uri's behavior was strange in the visitor's eyes. From a young age, he had been trained to suppress his enthusiasm and to daven in a respectful, restrained fashion, and now he saw for the first time, a very different kind of *tefillah* to what he was used to.

After davening, the man went to the Rebbe's house. He could not contain his questions and he had one goal: to present his doubts to the Rebbe and understand the significance of his remarkable behavior during davening. The man knocked at the Rebbe's door but was disappointed when it was opened by the *gabbai*, who informed him that “The Rebbe has traveled to the nearby town for Shabbos.” The *gabbai* was about to close the door, but the wealthy man was in no hurry to leave; his curiosity gave him no rest and he once again knocked at the peeling door.

Again the *gabbai* opened the door and the Yid hurriedly threw his question. “Tell me please, I know that the Rebbe is a holy man and that all his practices are based on holiness. But there is one thing I cannot understand: Why does he scream when he davens? Can he not daven in a calm state, without screaming, like I do, like my community does and like so many other good Jews daven?”

The *gabbai* was unruffled by the question; he was used to such inquiries. This time, as well, he offered an answer that he was used to giving: “Look, Reb Yid, the holy Rebbe's soul is always burning with fear of Hashem, and during davening, when he is deep in conversation with his Creator, that awe bursts forth with even more intensity, to the point where he screams.”

But the guest was not convinced, and he asked persistently: “I don't think that my heart or the hearts of everyone else in my community burns with any less intensity than the Rebbe—yet we don't scream!”

“If you don't scream, that is a sign that your heart does not burn the way the Rebbe's does,” the *gabbai* chided. But the man did not capitulate so quickly and insisted again that that was not the case.

This argument could have continued for hours, but the hustle and bustle on the street outside the house reminded them both that Shabbos was drawing closer and they had to stop their argument unless they wanted to be among those who do not toil on Erev Shabbos and thus, what will they eat on Shabbos? (*Avodah Zarah* 3a)

The guest turned to go back to the street, and the door was about to close a second time, but suddenly he recalled that there had been another purpose to the visit: He had a large sum of money that he intended to use for business, and he wanted to deposit it with the Rebbe. The Rebbe was not in town but the *gabbai* had also made the impression as a trustworthy, wise man, and thus he returned and knocked yet a third time on the Rebbe's door, and asked the *gabbai* if he could watch his precious wallet until Motzai Shabbos.

“I'm afraid to leave my money in the hotel room,” the guest explained, “especially as I will be out of the room for long hours during Shabbos.”

The *gabbai* agreed and the packet of money changed hands.

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Shabbos was very peaceful and uplifting for the guest, and when the first stars appeared in the sky, he hurried to the Rebbe's home to ask the *gabbai* to return his money.

He was stunned when the *gabbai* put on an innocent face and spread his hands, asking, “Money? What money are you talking about? You must be mixing me up with someone else!”

“What do you mean which money?” the guest was stunned. “Don't you remember that I deposited my money with you just before Shabbos?” But the *gabbai* insisted, “I remember no such thing; I don't know what you are talking about, sir.”

“Liar! How dare you claim that I didn't leave the money here,” the guest lashed out at the *gabbai* in a way that was very uncharacteristic of his German restrained demeanor. “We stood right here facing each other and the packet of money changed hands. Give me my money right now!”

But the *gabbai* was unmoved and he continued to claim in a calm tone that he did not know anything about the money and that the guest must surely be mixing him up with someone who looked like him.

The guest could not restrain himself anymore, and he lost it completely. He grasped the *gabbai* by the collar and shook him violently and began to scream hysterically, with tears in his eyes: “You scoundrel!!! Give me back my money now!”

“Reb Yid,” the *gabbai* said in a calm a tone as ever, which made the guest loosen his grip. “Why scream and shout like a wounded animal? Speak calmly, like a human being!”

“Calmly???” the guest snapped, furious all over again. “How can I speak calmly when I'm about to lose all my money? How should I not go wild when my future is at stake here? My heart is afire with fury and fear!”

Suddenly, a smile spread across the *gabbai*'s face. He put a warm hand on the guest's shoulder and calmed him: “Now you have seen for yourself that ‘when it hurts, you scream!’ Now take your money and go in peace. I never intended to benefit from it in the slightest. I just wanted to teach you that when the heart is on fire—you scream.”

“Indeed,” the *gabbai* said in a voice so low it was almost a whisper, “there are those who scream about their money and there are those who scream about their *Yiras Shamayim*, and the holy Rebbe is part of the latter group.”

From the *Maggid*, Rav Shabsai Yudelevitz, *Siach Yosef*, p. 89