

# Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

## PARASHAS DEVARIM

### IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

#### Moshe's Rebuke to Bnei Yisrael

אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה (א, א)

Rav Chaim of Friedburg, the brother of the Maharal of Prague, explains by way of *remez* how the names of the *parshiyos* in *Sefer Devraim* are a hidden rebuke that Moshe delivered to Bnei Yisrael:

"*Eileh hadevarim*," these are the words that I speak before you, "*v'eschanan*,"—and I plead with you to accept them and heed them, "*eikev, re'eh*," because as you can see, "*shoftim*,"—every action of a person is put to judgment before the Heavenly Court, and especially "*ki seitzei*," when a person soul departs from this world and from there, "*ki savo*," to the World to Come.

Although at this time, "*atem nitzavim*," you are alive and existing in this world, you should know that "*vayeilech*," a person does not know when he will leave to the next world. Therefore, "*haazinu*," listen to my rebuke, and thus, you will merit "*vezos habrachah*," in this world and the next.

Sefer Hachaim – Selichah Umehilah 1

#### Praising Hashem First is a Condition for Fulfillment of the Brachah

ויברך אתכם כאשר דבר לכם (א, א)

Aside for this *passuk*, there is one other place in *Tanach* where the word *ברך* is punctuated "*vivarech*." That is in *Tehillim* (145:21): "*Tehillas Hashem yedaber pi vivarech kol basar Shem Kodsho l'olam va'ed*."

The connection between the two *pesukim* is explained by Rav Chaim Palagi, the Rav of Izmir, according to the *Zohar* (*Vayechi* 227 2). He says that one who comes to bless his son or his friend must precede it with first blessing HaKadosh Baruch Hu, for if not, the *brachah* will not be fulfilled.

That is hinted to in these *pesukim*: "*Vivarech eschem kaasher diber lachem*," if you want the *brachah* that you have bestowed upon someone else to be fulfilled, precede it with praise of Hashem, as it says "*vivarech kol basar Shem Kodsho l'olam va'ed*."

Tenufah Chaim

#### The Power of Moshe Depends on Am Yisrael's Actions

איכה אשא לבדי טרחכם ומשאכם וריבכם (א, יב)

The meaning of the word "*masachem*," your burden, is explained by the Ramban as a word of *tefillah*, as it says (*Yirmiyahu* 7:16) "*v'al*

*tisa b'adam rinah utefillah*." It would seem difficult, according to this, to understand Moshe's complaint: is it so difficult to offer up a prayer for Am Yisrael?

The *Pnei Menachem* of Ger explained:

As it appears from the words of the *Mishnah* (*Rosh Hashanah* 3:8) about the war with Amalek, "And do Moshe's hands make war?...But...as long that Yisrael would look Heavenwards and

was his complaint: "*Eichah esa levadi*," how can I offer a *tefillah* for you while you leave me alone and do not participate with me in committing your hearts to your Father in Heaven?

Pnei Menachem, 5753

#### Shamoa-Shema before Ushfateitem Tzedek

שמע בין אחים ושפטתם צדק (א, טז)

Rav Mordechai HaKohen of Tzefas, in his *sefer Sifsei Kohein* al haTorah, writes:

The word "*shamoa*" is written without a *vav*; this is the Torah's way to hint to the obligation of the *dayan* to recite *Shema* (which has the same letters as *shamoa*) before "*ushfateitem tzedek*." As the Chachamim instructed (*Brachos* 30a) "One does not stand to daven...from *din*." The *Shulchan Aruch* explains (*Orach Chaim* 93:3) that the reason for this prohibition is so that he can have *kavanah* during *davening* and his heart will not be distracted by the decision of the judgment.

#### Tefillah Accomplishes Half

ותשבו ותבכו לפני ה'...ותשבו בקדש ימים רבים כימים (א, מה-מו)

Harav Pinchas Halevi Horowitz in *Panim Yafos* and the *Netziv of Volozhin* in *Haamek Davar* explain similarly: From this *passuk* we learn the source of the famous statement of Chazal that "*tefillah osah mechetzah*," *tefillah* accomplishes half (*Vayikra Rabbah* 7 1). As Rashi explains, after Bnei Yisrael cried and pleaded that they should not have to wander in the desert for the rest of their lives, their *tefillos* accomplished half the goal, because corresponding to the nineteen years that they wandered from place to place, they spent nineteen years in peaceful settlement in *Kadesh*.

#### Krias Shema Against the Harmful Forces

לא היתה קריה אשר לא לקחנו מאתם ששים בעיר (ג, ד)

Rabi Avraham Azulai, the grandfather of the Chida, writes:

Each night, when a person's soul rises On High, his bed is surrounded by sixty harmful angels, and when he recites *Krias Shema al Hamittah*, whose first *passuk* has sixty letters, they cannot harm him.

We can find a hint to this in this *passuk*: "*Lo haysah kiryah asher lo lakachnu me'itam shishim me'ir*." There is no *Krias Shema* (*kiryah*) that does not prevent the sixty harmful agents from harming a person (*ir* = angel, *Rashi Pesachim* 33a).

Baalei Bris Avram, Vayeira

#### Amen Saves A Person from Gehinnom

ואמר אליכם לא תערצון ולא תראון מהם (א, כט)

"*Velo sir'un me'heim*," do not fear them, is an acronym for "*mavess*," death. The acronym of the final letter of each word is "amen," to teach us that one who is careful to answer amen should not be afraid of the day he dies, because he is guaranteed that the gates of Gan Eden will be open to him.

Yoshia Tzion, Devarim 24

#### Oi Malchus Shamayim

אתה הראת לדעת כי ה' הוא האלקים אין עוד מלבדו (ד, לה)

The final letters of the words "*hu ha'Elokim ein*" are amen, and linking that to the words that follow "*ein od milvado*" we can learn that when replying amen a person accepts upon himself the Yoke of Heaven and testifies in his heart that there is no other besides Hashem. As the Gemara says (*Shabbos* 119b): "What is amen? *Kel Melech ne'eman*." Rashi there explains that one who replies amen believes and testifies about his Creator that He is a "*Kel Melech ne'eman*."

Vaye'etar Yitzchak, Shabbos 119b

commit their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they would prevail." The success of Moshe's *tefillah* depended on the actions of Am Yisrael. Here, too, as long as Am Yisrael would commit their hearts to their Father in Heaven, it was in Moshe's power to offer up a *tefillah* on their behalf. But when they went against the Word of Hashem, and Moshe was left "*levado*," alone, to face the battle, he could not save them with the power of his *tefillah* alone. That

#### Tashuri meirosh amanah.

(Shir Hashirim 4:8)

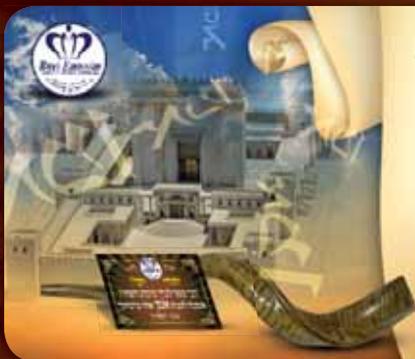
The future exiles will only be redeemed in the merit of *amanah*, as it says (*Shir Hashirim* 4:8): "*Iti miLevanon kallah iti miLevanon tavo'i tashuri meirosh amanah, come with Me My bride from Lebanon and come with Me from Lebanon and look from the peak of Amanah.*" (*Tanchuma Beshalach* 10)

In these days, our eyes are all turned Heavenward in expectation of the final Redemption.

Let us strengthen ourselves in the mitzvah of *emunah*—which is the key to the *Geulah Sheleimah*, as the *Midrash* says.

Let us make sure to begin the day by reciting *Birchos Hashachar* and answering amen afterwards *bechavrusa*, and with that, we will strengthen our *emunah* in Hashem, who sustains us and gives us strength each day with compassion.

May we merit the final Redemption speedily in our day, Amen.



## The Tefillah of Hodu

## Thanking Hashem Each and Every Day

"The Upper World has no wish in the lower world other than for a person to know and thank his G-d that created him. And the intention of raising one's voice when davening, and the intention of the shuls and the merit of tefillah berabbim, is so that people should have a place where they can gather and thank their Creator Who made them, and they should publicize it and say before Him: 'We are Your creations!'" (Ramban, Shemos 13:16)

The tefillah of Hodu is, from beginning to end, a prayer of gratitude and recognition of the chassadim that Hashem does to us, as well as a plea that these chassadim should continue for eternity.

In the first part of the prayer (from "Hodu l'Hashem" until "Vayomru kol ha'am amen vehalel l'Hashem") we cite the tefillah of David Hamelech that is brought in *sefer Divrei Hayamim* (1, 16:8-36 and *Tehillim* 105), and from there on we continue with a compilation of pesukim from Tanach in the order established by the Rishonim, with their great wisdom.

## Preceding Pesukei Dezimra

The reason Hodu precedes Pesukei Dezimra is explained in *Orchos Chaim* (*Hilchos Brachos* 18) in the name of the author of *Sefer Ha'eshkol*: At the beginning of the reign of David Hamelech, the Kohanim would recite the tefillah of Hodu when they brought the *Korban Tamid*, half when the *Tamid* of *Shacharis* was brought, and half when the *Tamid* of the evening was sacrificed.

When David Hamelech was privileged to bring the *Aron Hashem* from the home of Oved Edom of Gat to its resting place in the Ohel, after it had been carried from place to place for years, (See *Divrei Hayamim* 1, 16a), he established that a tefillah be recited each day at *Shacharis* in memory of the miracle. It is apt to recite Hodu here, because we have just completed reciting the *parshiyos* of the *Korban Tamid*, and, as mentioned, the main reason for saying it was that it be during the time when the *Korbanos Tamid* were sacrificed. (*Rama*"k, *Siddur Tefillah L'Moshe*).

## Lifnim Meshuras Hadin

The word "Hodu" symbolizes gratitude for a miracle that was done *lifnim mishuras hadin* [above the call of duty, so to speak] (Commentary on the tefillah by the Raba"n, cited in *Tefillah L'Moshe* Lopianki), and it is thus most suited as the beginning of this tefillah, because the Rishonim write (*Kolbo*) that the ten languages of gratitude mentioned in it correspond to the gratitude for the ten plagues that Hashem brought upon Egypt, and through which He saved Bnei Yisrael with overt miracles. These miracles were done for our forbears *lifnim mishuras hadin*, as Chazal said (See *Vayikra Rabbah* 23 2): "These and these [Egyptians and Jews] were both *areilim*, these grew their hair long and these grew their hair long; these wear *kilayim* and these wear *kilayim*," and therefore, it is worthy that the gratitude for them should begin with Hodu. (*Rimas Yitzchak*)

## Gratitude for the Privilege to Express Thanks

The sentence that opens tefillah Hodu, "Hodu l'Hashem kiru biShemo," is explained by the *Alshich* (*Tehillim* 105:1) as follows: "Don't let it enter your mind that Hashem has to be grateful to You for singing to Him, because, on the contrary, you should be thanking Him for giving you the privilege of merely mentioning His Name, and that is Hodu l'Hashem for calling His name."

Similarly, the *Siddur Siach Yitzchak* explains what we say later in the tefillah: "Yismach lev mevakshei Hashem": When a person makes the effort to seek a favor from another person, if he ultimately does not receive what he wants, then all his efforts in trying to arrange his requests are for naught. But that is not the case with "mevakshei Hashem": With regards to them, there is an elevated purpose in the actual request, which is a way to become closer to Hashem and that is what we say, "Yismach lev mevakshei Hashem," the actual request is supposed to bring us to a state of joy.

When Harav Avraham Abeli, the Av Bais Din of Vilna, passes away, his friend, Harav Itzele of Volozhin was asked to eulogize him, and he said:

Each morning, we begin Hodu with the *passuk*, "Hodu l'Hashem kiru biShemo hodiu b'amim alilosav." It appears that the *passuk* should be explained: "Hodu l'Hashem - kiru biShemo": a Jewish person whose heart is alert to constantly notice the many chassadim of Hashem Who leads the world with benevolent and compassion - it is enough for him to read the Name of Hashem to be aroused to thank him. But "hodu b'amim alilosav" - the non-Jew, whose mind is closed and eyes are blind to what is going on around him, cannot thank before he is first informed about the greatness of Hashem from the earliest times to this day. Through this, his heart will be awakened to recognize the miracles of Hashem and to express gratitude for them.

"So too, is it the case with the *niftar* before us," Reb Itzele concluded. "There are people who, when they pass away, in order to arouse the *tzibbur* to feel the void, the eulogizer must expound with stories of their actions and good deeds. But we, the residents of Vilna, do not need to explain who Rav Avraham Abeli was; we all recognize his tremendous greatness! Therefore, it is enough for us to shout together: 'Rav Avraham Abeli is no longer!' for the tears of pain to flood our eyes." (*Peh Kadosh, Tehillim* 105)

## Amen Vehallel L'Hashem

A hint to the secrets and *segulos* of amen, whose essence is praise and extolment of Hashem, can be found later on in the tefillah: "Baruch Hashem Elokei Yisrael min ha'olam v'ad ha'olam vayomru kol ha'am amen vehallel l'Hashem." The *brachah* concludes with the words "amen v'hallel l'Hashem" using the *Shem Havayah*.

When we combine the words "hallel" (65) and "Havayah" (26), we receive the numerical value of 91, which is amen, and from here we can learn that the secret of amen is that it unites the Name of Hashem as it is recited and as it is written (*Adnus* and *Havayah*) as brought down in the holy *sefarim*. (*Ohr Tzaddikim* 19)

The chairman of Bnei Emunim, Harav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, *sheyichyeh*, offered a beautiful explanation at the gathering of *bnei yeshivah* in Av 5775, regarding the *nusach* of Hodu:

"Tnu oz l'Elokim al Yisrael gaavaso ve'uzo bashechakim"--we are saying something remarkable here: "Give power to Hashem." How can we small beings add power to the Almighty? We can find the answer in the later part of the *passuk*: "Al Yisrael gaavaso ve'uzo bashechakim," whose acronym is equal to the numerical value of amen. The same small word, "amen," is how Bnei Yisrael can add power to the Heavenly Entourage, as explained at length in the *Zohar HaKadosh* (*Parashas Vayeilech*, see *Shelah, Maseches Tamid* 80). Even more wondrously, the words "nora Elokim mimikdashcha" are also an acronym for amen.

## A Cry in the Desert

No one had prepared him for the surprise in the mail box that morning. He could also never have fathomed how the envelope's contents would hit him like a thunderbolt...

"Ach, Shraga is making a bar mitzvah... Who would have believed it! But where is he and where am I..."

"Best of friends" they'd been dubbed by all and not for naught. For twenty two years, they did everything together. They were born in the same city, spent their childhoods in the same neighborhood, and were in the same class. They continued together to *yeshiva ketanah*, and then *yeshiva gedolah*... It was no wonder when a few days after Mayer became engaged, that his friend Shraga celebrated his own joyous occasion.

Fourteen years had passed since their ways had parted. Mayer settled in far off Ofakim, while Shraga continued living in the city where he had grown up.

At first, they kept in touch with letters, but slowly, the ties weakened, especially on Shraga's side, as his family grew and he had less time to nurture long distance friendships, until they lost touch entirely.

Shraga's home resounded with the cried and laughs of his growing family, but in Ofakim, Mayer and his wife experienced a very difficult fourteen years, of loneliness, silence and dashed hopes and disappointments.

They spent their time, money and energy on finding a solution to the problem that cast a pall over their lives. But salvation did not come, and their home remained empty. The doctors had all but given up hope.

Now, when the envelope was opened to reveal a modest bar mitzvah invitation, with a warm, handwritten note from a friend from the past, the reality hit Mayer in the face like a resounding slap.

"Shraga is making a bar mitzvah--and where am I?!"

With the shock and pain still written all over his face, he hurried to the home of his rebbi, known for his compassion, listening ear and sage advice, Harav Shimshon Pinkus, z"l.

"Rebbi," Shraga cried with tears beginning to run down his cheeks, "I can't take it anymore!"

The cry from deep inside him manifested his suffering. How much could they wait, suffer, work and then be disappointed? Perhaps it would just be better to throw up their hands in despair.

"Reb Mayer," Rav Pinkus said to him after sharing his *talmid's* pain, "Have you cried to the Ribon Olamim?"

"What does that mean?" Mayer recoiled at the very question. "For years I have been davening and pleading to him!"

"I didn't ask if you davened," Harav Pinkus replied. "I asked if you screamed. Did you scream to Him from the bottom of your heart? Did you totally cast yourself upon His compassion and *chessed*?"

As he stood uneasily, Rav Pinkus surprised him by saying, "Come back to me tonight at *chatzos* and we'll talk about it."

"At *chatzos*?" Mayer was surprised, but he fell silent and agreed. If the Rav was asking, there must be a reason.

Late that night, Mayer knocked softly at the door, and Rav Pinkus opened it

immediately. The Rav took his hand and without a word, led him downstairs to the car waiting outside the building. They climbed inside and drove off into the dark night.

Mayer sat beside the driver, completely puzzled. Where was the Rav taking him so late at night? He became even more curious when the car turned out of Ofakim heading south, towards the open desert.

About fifteen minutes later, the car turned into a dirt road and began to climb a small hill overlooking the expanse. When they reached the top of the hill, they got out of the car and looked around. The middle of the month moon dimly lit up the area, and Rav Shimshon turned to the young man, pointed to the black, star-studded sky, and said, "Now I will show you how we cry to our Father in Heaven."

And in front of the *avreich's* shocked eyes, Rav Pinchas began to cry bitterly: "Tatte!! Abba!!! Tatte!! Abba!!!"

There wasn't a soul for miles around, and only a dull echo bounced back from the desolate expanse: "Tateeeee!!!! Abbbbaaa!!!!"

"Well," Rav Pinkus said, "no one hears us here besides Hashem, so now you can scream, cry to your Father in Heaven, speak to Him, unload all the pain that has accumulated in your heart in recent years. Only He can hear you now, and only He can really help you!"

"I will come to get you in half an hour," the Rav told Mayer, and without waiting for an answer, he started the car and drove off.

A few minutes passed before the tears began to flow like water. Mayer cried and screamed as he had never done before, and opened his heart wide and let his emotions reign free. His cries echoed in the desert, and it seemed as though they were resonating from one end of the world to another.

Half hour later, the Rav drove back up. Mayer entered the car silently. He wanted to hold on to that feeling of closeness he had achieved over the past few minutes, something he had never felt before.

When the car stopped near his home, he felt a cleanliness and purity spreading through his body.

His *yeshuah* was at hand, of that he was sure.

About a year later, the news spread throughout Ofakim. Reb Mayer and his wife had defied all the doctors' odds and were celebrating a double *yeshuah*! Everyone spoke about the amazing miracle, and the rumor of the "mofess" of Rav Pinkus spread almost as rapidly as the news itself.

"How does one perform such a *mofess*?" the rav was asked. But he was unmoved. "There was no *mofess* here," he said. "If I wouldn't have been there, I wouldn't have believed it," he added and then explained: "It's very simple! As soon as that young man cried to Hashem from a place of such closeness and submission, there was simply no way that his tefillah would go unanswered!"