

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



PARASHAS KISETZEI

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Victory Depends on Prayer

“כי תצא למלחמה על איביך ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך” (כא, י)

By way of *remez*, **Rav Shlomo, the Av Bais Din of Lublin**, wrote:

“*Ki seitzei*” is numerically equivalent to “*hatefillah*.” From here we learn that the primary success of Am Yisrael in war is dependent on how strong they are in *tefillah*. As Chazal said (See *Bamidbar Rabba* 22, 3), for every soldier that would go out for a *milchemes mitzvah*, they would send a person to stand and daven.

Sefer Hagematrios

On the same subject, **Harav Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich of Samloj** added:

The later part of the *passuk* explains the decisive role of *tefillah* in the success at war: One of the parts of *tefillah* is *prishas kapayim*, spreading of the hands, as Moshe told Pharaoh. (*Shemos* 9:29): “When I leave the city I will spread my hands to Hashem.” This is what the *passuk* is hinting to here: “*Unesano Hashem Elokacha*.” How? In the merit of “*Beyadcha*,” your *tefillah*.

Avnei Hamakom – Even Hareichayim 59

“Unesano” in the Merit of Shema Yisrael

“ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך ושבית שבינו” (כא, י)

From the words of the *passuk* (*ibid* 20:2-3) “And it will be when you get closer to the war, the Kohein approached and spoke to the nation; and he said to them *Shema Yisrael*.” Chazal explained (*Sotah* 42b) “Rabi Yonosan said in the name of Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai, HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Am Yisrael: Even if you did not fulfill anything but *Krias Shema* of *Shacharis* and *Arvis* – you are not given over to their hands.”

A *remez* for this was explained by **Rav Avraham Tzvi Weiss, zt”l**, Av Bais Din of Neve Achiezer, from the words in this *parashah*:

If your enemies rise up to fight you, even when you do not have enough merits to be saved from them, you are guaranteed, “*Unesano Hashem beyadcha*,” on condition that you are careful about “*veshavi'sa shiv'yo*”, which is an acronym for “*umeyachadim Shimcha bechol yom tamid v'omrim b'ahavah Shema Yisrael*.” (From *Tefillas Shacharis*)

Birchas Avraham

Nails Hint to the Severity of the Sin

“ועשתה את צפרניה” (כא, יב)

According to Chazal (*Bereishis Rabba* 20, 12)

before the sin of the *Eitz Hadaas* Adam Harishon was clad in a covering made of the fingernail material, which was as pretty as pearls. After the sin, this covering remained only on the fingertips and toes. The *mekubal Rav Mordechai HaKohen of Tzefas* explained by way of *drash* what the Torah tells a *Yefas Toar* to do:

“*V'asesa es tziparneha*,” before you can join Klal Yisrael, pay attention and introspect as to how much that one and only sin cost Adam Harishon, and what might be your fate if you continue in your errant ways, and thus, you should better your actions before Hashem.

For this reason (see *Pri Megadim* 298, 3, in *Eshel Avraham* 5) it is customary to look at our nails during *Havdalah* on Motzaei Shabbos, because it is then that we ask in the *tefillah* of *Atah Chonantanu*: “*Avinu Malkeinu hachel aleinu... chashuchim mikol chet umenukim mikol avon*,” Hashem, allow these coming days to greet us cleansed of sin. Therefore, looking at the nails can teach us a *kal v'chomer*: If Adam Harishon was punished so severely for the one sin he committed, what can we—so full of sins—answer for ourselves?!

Sifsei Kohein al HaTorah

Ninety Amens Against the Harmful Elements

“כי תצא למלחמה על איביך ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך” (כא, י)

The *Chida* (*Midbar Kedmos* 1 33) brings from **Rabi Elazar Nachman Poa** that replying amen ninety times in a day saves a person from harmful elements. This can be hinted to in our *passuk*: “*ki seitzei*”, is an acronym for “*kol yom taaneh tzaddik ameinim*” and if you are careful to do so you are guaranteed “*unesano Hashem Elokecha beyadecha*” that you will be spared from the harmful elements who rise up against you.

Niflaos MiTorasecha

Tefillah and Brachos Aloud— a Segulah for Success in Chinuch

“כי יהיה בן סורר ומורה איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו” (כא, יח)

The **Ari HaKadosh** says that although HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows our thoughts, we are careful to utter the words of *tefillah* with our mouths, and

do not suffice with thinking in our hearts, so that others who hear us will be awakened and also daven. The Ari gave a hint to this from the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (145:21) “*Tehillas Hashem yedaber pi*,” by me uttering the words from my mouth “*vivarech kol basar Shem Kodsho l'olam va'ed*”, those who hear will learn and also praise Hashem.

Harav Tzvi Hirsh of Munkatch further explained this *passuk*: “If a person has a *ben sorer umoreh*, his parents must know that this is caused because their son grew up in a home where “*einenu shomea bekol aviv ubekol imo*,” the *tefillas* and *brachos* are recited with no voice and no *kavanah*.

Tiferes Banim

It is also fitting to bring the words of **Harav Yaakov Meir Shechter, shlita**, Rosh Yeshivas Shaar Hashamayim, from a letter of *chizuk* that he wrote to his followers:

“It is worthy bring about *brachah* in Jewish homes, and to raise the sons and daughters to recite the *Birchos Hanehenin* aloud and with *kavnaah*, and all the people at home should reply amen. It should also be customary each morning that one of the family members recites *Birchos Hashachar* aloud and slowly, and everyone will answer amen after him. Through this, *brachah* will rest on the house, and there will no longer be pain and suffering amongst us.”

Hamevarech Yisbarech p. 66

Replying Yehei Shemei Rabba Counters the Yetzer Hara

“כי תצא מחנה על איביך” (כג, י)

Harav Yosef Tzvi of Gruchov said:

Chazal lauded the attributes and *segulos* of saying *Amen Yehei Shmei Rabba*, which arouse Heavenly Mercy Above and atone for a person's sins, as Chazal promised (*Shabbos* 119b), and explained in *Tikkunei Zohar Chadash* 132 a on replying amen): “Anyone who replies *Amen Yehei Shemi Rabba Mevarach* with all his might, his decrees are torn up.”

We can find a hint to this in the *passuk*: “*Ki teitzei machaneh al oivecha*” the word *machaneh* is explained by *Onkelos* as “*mashrisa*”, that if a person asks to go out to war against his *yetzer hara*, which makes him sin, and to win him, he must make sure to answer *Amen Yehei Shemi Rabba Mevarach Tamid*, which can be condensed into the acronym of “*mashrisa*.”

Ohel Yosef

Replying Amen Increases the Good in the World

On Friday 13 Elul is the *yahrtzeit* of **Harav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, the Ben Ish Chai**. This is what he wrote about the words of Chazal (*Nazir* 66a): “*Talmidei chachamim marbim shalom b'olam*”:

Amen has a connection between the Names of Havayah and Adnus of Hashem, and therefore, answering amen has the power to increase peace in the world. Therefore, our sages who established that we make *brachos* and reply amen, and their disciples were awakened to be strict about replying amen properly, increase peace in the world. (*Ben Yehoyada, Nazir* 66a)

I also say *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*



Halleli Nafshi Es Hashem

"Ahalelah Hashem bechayai" – if he does not praise Hashem when he's alive, when will he praise Him—when he dies? Does it not say, 'Lo hameisim yehallelu Kah', therefore it says, 'Ahalelah Hashem bechayai,' as long as he is alive he praises Hashem." (Midrash Tehillim 146)

As part of *Pesukei Dezimrah*, which are an introduction to *Tefillas Shacharis*, the objective of this passage, '*Halleli nafshi es Hashem*,' is to arouse the person to praise his Creator and to do as many good deeds as possible as long as he is alive, because afterwards, he will not be able to do so. As Chazal said, (*Avos* 4:17) "One hour of *teshuvah* and good deeds in this world is more beautiful than all of life in the World to Come" (*Mei'am Loetz, Tehillim* 147 1)

Ahallelah Hashem Bechayai

The commentaries offer several explanations of the *musar* concealed in the *passuk* that begins the passage: "*Ahallelah Hashem bechayai, azamrah l'Elokai bekirbi.*"

1. According to the *Ramban*, the significance of this declaration is that the entire life of a person should be dedicated by him to *Avodas Hashem*, as he writes (*Devarim* 6:13) in the explanation of the commandment: "*V'oso taavod*":

"That at all times he should be like a purchased slave who serves his master constantly, putting his master's work as a priority and his own needs as secondary, until he reaches what Chazal said (*Avos* 2:12): "And all your deeds should be *l'Shem Shamayim*," that even his physical needs should be for the purpose of *Avodas Hashem*, (and even when) he eats and sleeps and performs his bodily needs, it is in order to sustain the body to serve Hashem... And he should have in mind during all his physical needs the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 146:2) '*Ahallelah Hashem bechayai azamrah l'Elokai*..."

2. The *Malbim* (*Tehillim* 146 2) explained in the simpler fashion that there are two parts of gratitude in this *passuk*: "*Ahallelah Hashem bechayai*," for the actual sustenance of life, "*azamrah l'Elokai b'odi*" from the word "*od*," which is the gratitude for all the extra things Hashem has given us besides what is necessary for the sustenance of life.

3. The *sefer Tehillah L'David* (*Tehillim*), explains by way of *musar*: Sometimes a person can despair of himself, and think: How can I praise Hashem? I am filled with sins, flaws and blemishes? Therefore, David Hamelech says: "*Ahallelah Hashem bechayai*," the fact that Hashem left me alive is a sign that His desire is that I should live in order to rectify all that I have damaged, and I should become connected to Him by praising Him with all my being.

On Shabbos Hagadol 5618, when the *tzaddik* Rav Moshe of Kobrin was on his deathbed, some two weeks before his passing, those close to him saw him raising his eyes heavenwards and saying, "*Halleli nafshi es Hashem*." I know that my soul will continue to praise Hashem in the World to Come as well, the world of souls, but still, I ask of Hashem, "*Ahallelah Hashem bechayai*," I want to praise Hashem while I am alive in this world. (*Imros Moshe*, in the *sefer hatefillah*)

The Obligation and Advantage of Bitachon

The continuation of the passage is, "*Al*

tivtechu benedivim, beven adam she'ein lo seshuah", and it addresses the person's obligation to have faith in Hashem, and to depend only on Him, because by contrast to *bitachon* in Hashem, Who has no limitations as to how much or little He can save a person, the faith in man has no purpose and is fleeting.

By perusing the *pesukim* of this *mizmor* we can see that there are three main drawbacks in putting faith in "*adam she'ein lo seshuah*":

The first is '*ratzon*.' It is possible that a person may very much want to help his friend, but that will have no staying power, because tomorrow "*etzei rucho*," that willingness may evaporate and he will no longer want to help his friend. The second is ability, *yecholes*. Even if a person remains wanting to help his friend, it is possible that tomorrow "*yashuv l'admaso*" and he will no longer be able to do anything. The third is "*yediah*" that even when a person has the desire and ability to help, he still needs knowledge and insight in order to carry out his desire to action and to take action on behalf of his friend. And it is possible that "*bayom hahu avdu eshtonosav*", it will emerge that his thoughts were not right and instead of benefitting his friend, he may even have harmed him.

Therefore we declare: "*Ashrei she'Kel Yaakov b'ezro sivro al Hashem Elokav*," fortunate is the person who does not depend on flesh and blood, because only HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who created Heaven and Earth, has the desire, the ability and the knowledge that can help a person. Therefore, praiseworthy is the person who trusts Hashem because only he will merit true and complete salvation which will last for eternity. (Rabi Azariah Figu, *Binah L'Itim, Eis Ha'asaf Drush* 14).

Who is the truly wealthy person?!

The philanthropist Rav Moshe Chaim Rottenberg, the brother of the Chiddushei Harim, once received a visit from one of the Chassidim who was extremely poor. He had a letter from the Kotzker Rebbe, *zt"l*, in which the Rebbe asked Reb Moshe Chaim to help the poor man marry off his daughter.

In response, Reb Moshe Chaim gave him one ruble and bid him farewell. The poor man was stunned and said, "Is it possible? I need more than this just to cover the cost of the journey." But Reb Moshe Chaim did not respond. The poor man left the house brokenhearted, and set out for home.

As he was walking, a messenger from Reb Moshe Chaim caught up to him and gave the *chassid* a generous sum that was enough for all the wedding expenses. The *chassid* was so taken aback he decided to retrace his steps to Reb Moshe Chaim to find out the meaning of what had happened.

Reb Moshe Chaim explained: When I saw you coming to me with a letter from the Rebbe, I realized that you were sure that the money was already in your pocket... You were so confident in me that you forget that there is a Creator in the world and it is only He that you should trust! Therefore, I put you off for a bit, because I hope that through that you would remember Who is the real authority and Whom you need to truly trust, and when that happened, I gave you a generous sum. (*Otzaros Ha'agadah, Tehillim* 146)

Ashrei She'Kel Yaakov B'Ozro - Fortunate Is the One Helped by the G-d of Yaakov

This story was told by the darshan Rabi Machluf Haddad, one of the scholars of Djerba, in his *sefer Kerachem Av, on the Torah*. It is a valuable lesson for ever person about the obligation of trusting Hashem and not humans, because only Hashem can bring about salvation.

There was a man in Eretz Yisrael named Elkanah. He was very wealthy, and was as pious as he was wealthy. His home was open to all the needy and downtrodden, and he would generously distribute food and drink to poor families every day.

In time, the wheel of fortune turned and he was faced with the challenges of poverty. Of all the many assets that he'd had, he had just one goat left, and he sold its milk to eke out a living.

But some time later, the goat died, and with it, his last source of sustenance. So he decided to set out for the big city, where he hoped to find work that would help him earn a decent living, and perhaps even to regain some of his former wealth.

On his way to the city, Elkanah sat down to rest beneath a tree on the side of the road. Suddenly, a man dressed in simple clothes approached him and began to speak to him and inquire about his life. Elkanah poured out his tale of woe, how he had lost all his wealth, and how now, he was looking for work to earn a bit of money to support his family.

Elkanah did not fathom that the man standing before him was none other than Shlomo Hamelech, who, in his great humility, would sometimes walk around the cities of his kingdom in simple clothes that did not betray his lofty status.

When Shlomo heard Elkanah's story, his heart was filled with compassion. He took out a scroll from his pocket, wrote down a few words, sealed it with wax, and told Elkanah: "Why do you have to make such an effort to find work? Give this letter to Shlomo Hamelech in Yerushalayim and he will surely give you enough money to provide you with reprieve and salvation!"

Elkanah took the letter from the man and put it among his belongings, chuckling to himself that this simple man thought his letter would influence the great Shlomo Hamelech, the wisest of all men. But after a month passed, during which time Elkanah tried his hand at any type of work he came upon, and was about to return home in desperation, he suddenly remembered the letter. Who knew, he thought, maybe there was something to the man's words? What can I lose by trying?!

Elkanah gathered his belongings and instead of returning home, he set out for Yerushalayim, where Shlomo Hamelech lived. It was a long, arduous journey, but after a few days, he found himself standing before Shlomo's magnificent palace.

There were guards at the entrance who stopped strangers from entering. But when Elkanah presented them with the letter in his hand, they immediately stepped back with respect and said, "We would be honored to open the gates for you, but right now the king is not home. He is davening in the Bais HaMikdash. If you seek to meet him you have to go there."

Elkanah turned towards the Bais HaMikdash. At the entrance to the *Azarah*, he noticed Shlomo Hamelech standing in the middle of praying, his hands raised to the Heavens, as he davened aloud: "*Barech aleinu Hashem Elokeinu es hashanah hazos...vesein brachah al pnei ha'adamah*..."

When Elkanah heard this, a thought

suddenly came to mind: If King Shlomo himself needed to ask for help from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, why do I have to turn to him for help? Is it not better that I should appeal directly to Hashem?!

Right then and there, Elkanah stood in one of the corners of the *Azarah*, fell on his face and began to daven before his Creator to have mercy on him and save him from his poverty and his lowly status. When he finished davening, he turned to go home, without even approaching the king. In his heart, he was sure that Hashem's salvation would arrive in the blink of an eye.

When he returned home, Elkanah began to deal in woodchopping, a hard, backbreaking job that provided him with just enough to live. But he didn't think any more about his *parnassah* difficulties because he was sure in his heart that Hashem would lift him out of his dire straits as soon as the right time came.

One day, Elkanah was busy working hard, with the sun burning down on his head and the sweat pouring from his body. Before him was a big, wide tree, and all his efforts to uproot it were futile. The time and effort that Elkanah invested in his work under the beating sun took its toll and he was on the verge of breaking down.

In despair, Elkanah raised his eyes to the Heavens and tearfully pleaded for a *yeshuah* from Hashem. Suddenly, the tree became uprooted at once, and beneath it Elkanah could see a tunnel in the earth. He peered into the tunnel and his eyes were almost blinded by the brilliance.

A veritable treasure was revealed before his shocked eyes: the multitudes of gold coins that filled the cavity told Elkanah that Hashem had heard his *tefillah* and was taking him from darkness to light.

From that day on, Elkanah's fortunes began to shine again. His business thrived and in time, he regained his earlier fortunes, and more.

One day, Shlomo Hamelech happened upon Elkanah's city, dressed simply as he had the earlier time they'd met. When he heard from the residents of the city about the wealthy *baal tzedakah* living in the city, he asked to meet him. When they met, Shlomo did not recognize the man, as he was dressed in elegant garments that he could hardly have afforded on their earlier encounter.

By contrast, Elkanah recognized the man well and when he remembered the letter that he had given him, he related all that had happened since he'd received it, including seeing Shlomo davening in the Bais HaMikdash and the decision he'd made to not to appeal to a human for salvation. That, he concluded, was how he'd merited such a wondrous salvation from Hashem. When Shlomo Hamelech heard this, he immediately identified himself to Elkanah and said: "Fortunate are you and your lot because you trusted in Hashem! Baruch Hashem Who did not leave you and guided you in the right way until the *yeshuah*! With your good deeds, you fulfilled with your soul the words of my master and father, David Hamelech, who said: '*Al tivtechu benedivim beven adam she'ein lo seshuah*...*Ashrei she'Kel Yaakov b'ezro shivro al Hashem Elokav*.'"

L'Maan Asaprah p. 55